

Paris

Paris the cosmopolitan capital of France is - with 2.2 million people living in zone 1 (Central Paris) and another 9.9 million people in the suburbs (*la banlieue*) - one of the largest cities in Europe. Located in the north of the country on the river Seine, Paris has the reputation of being the most beautiful and romantic of all cities, brimming with historic associations and remaining vastly influential in the realms of culture, art, fashion, food and design. Dubbed the **City of Light** (*la Ville Lumière*), it is the most popular tourist destination in the world. <http://english.pidf.com/>

Districts

Central Paris is officially divided into 20 districts called *arrondissements*, numbered from 1 to 20 in a clockwise spiral from the center of the city (known as *Kilometer Zero* and is located at the front of Notre Dame). *Arrondissements* are named according to their number. You might, for example, stay in the "5th", which would be written as *5e* (SANK-ee-emm) in French. The 12th and 16th *arrondissements* include large suburban parks, the *Bois de Vincennes*, and the *Bois de Boulogne* respectively.

The very best map you can get for Paris is called "*Paris Pratique par Arrondissement*" which you can buy for about €2 at any newsstand. It makes navigating the city easy- so much that one can imagine that the introduction of such map-books might be part of what made the *arrondissement* concept so popular in the first place.

Each *arrondissement* has its own unique character and selection of attractions for the traveler:



The Layout of Paris by district

- **1st (1^{er})**. The geographical center of Paris and a great starting point for travelers. The *Musée Louvre*, the *Jardin des Tuileries*, *Place du Vendôme*, *Les Halles*, *Palais Royal*, *Comédie-Française*, and *Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel* are all to be found here.
- **2nd (2^e)**. The central business district of the city - the *Bourse* (the Paris Stock Exchange), *Opéra-Comique*, *Théâtre des Variétés*, *Passage des Panoramas*, *Théâtre des Bouffes Parisiens* and the *Bibliothèque Nationale* are located here.
- **3rd (3^e)**. *Archives Nationales*, *Musée Carnavalet*, *Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers*, *Musée Carnavalet*, *Hôtel de Soubise*, the Former *Temple* fortress, and the northern, quieter part of the *Marais* can be found here.
- **4th (4^e)**. *Notre-Dame de Paris*, the *Hôtel de Ville* (Paris town hall), *Hôtel de Sully*, *Rue des Rosiers* and the Jewish Quarter, *Beaubourg*, *Le Marais*, *Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville*, *Centre Georges Pompidou*, *Place de Vosges*, *Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal*, *Saint-Jacques Tower* and Parisian island *Île Saint-Louis* can be found here.
- **5th (5^e)**. *Jardin des Plantes*, *Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle*, *Musée de Cluny*, *The Panthéon*, *Quartier Latin*, *Universités*, *La Sorbonne*, *Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève*, *Église Saint-Séverin*, *La Grande Mosquée*, *Le Musée de l'AP-HP* can be located here.

- **6th (6^e).** *Jardin du Luxembourg* as well as its *Senat*, *Place Saint-Michel*, *Église Saint-Sulpice* and *Saint-Germain des Prés* can be found here.
- **7th (7^e).** *Tour Eiffel* and its *Parc du Champ de Mars*, *Les Invalides*, *Musée d'Orsay*, *Assemblée Nationale* and its subset administrations, *Ecole Militaire*, and Parisian mega-store *Le Bon Marche* can be found here.
- **8th (8^e).** *Champs-Élysées*, *Arc de Triomphe*, *Place de la Concorde*, *le Palais de l'Élysée*, *Église de la Madeleine*, *Jacquemart-André Museum*, *Gare Saint-Lazare*, *Grand Palais* and *Petit Palais* can be found here.
- **9th (9^e).** *Opéra Garnier*, *Galleries Lafayette*, *Musée Grévin*, and *Folies Bergère* can be found here.
- **10th (10^e).** *Canal Saint-Martin*, *Gare du Nord*, *Gare de l'Est*, *Port Saint-Denis*, *Port Saint-Martin*, *Passage Brady*, *Passage du Prado*, and *Église Saint-Vincent-de-Paul* can be found here.
- **11th (11^e).** The bars and restaurants of *Rue Oberkampf*, *Bastille*, *Nation*, *New Jewish Quarter*, *Cirque d'Hiver*, and *Église Saint-Ambroise* can be found here.
- **12th (12^e).** *Opéra Bastille*, *Bercy Park* and *Village*, *Promenade Plantée*, *Quartier d'Aligre*, *Gare de Lyon*, *Cimetière de Picpus*, *Viaduc des arts* the *Bois de Vincennes*, and the *Zoo de Vincennes* can be found here.
- **13th (13^e).** *Quartier la Petite Asie*, *Place d'Italie*, *La Butte aux Cailles*, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF)*, *Gare d'Austerlitz*, *Manufacture des Gobelins*, *Butte-aux-Cailles* and *Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital* can be found here.
- **14th (14^e).** *Cimetière du Montparnasse*, *Gare Montparnasse*, *La Santé Prison*, *Denfert-Rochereau*, *Parc Montsouris*, *Stade Charléty*, *Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris*, and *Paris Catacombs* can be found here.
- **15th (15^e).** *Tour Montparnasse*, *Porte de Versailles*, *Front de Seine*, *La Ruche* and quartiers *Saint-Lambert*, *Necker*, *Grenelle* and *Javel* can be found here.
- **16th (16^e).** *Palais de Chaillot*, *Musée de l'Homme*, the *Bois de Boulogne*, *Cimetière de Passy*, *Parc des Princes*, *Musée Marmottan-Monet*, *Trocadéro*, and *Avenue Foch* can be found here.
- **17th (17^e).** *Palais des Congrès*, *Place de Clichy*, *Parc Monceau*, *Marché Poncelet*, and *Square des Batignolles* can be found here.
- **18th (18^e).** *Montmartre*, *Pigalle*, *Barbès*, *Basilica of the Sacré Cœur*, *Église Saint-Jean-de-Montmartre*, and *Goutte d'Or* can be found here.

- **19th (19^e).** *Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, Parc de la Villette, Bassin de la Villette, Parc des Buttes Chaumont, Cité de la Musique, Canal de l'Ourcq, and Canal Saint-Denis* can be found here.
- **20th (20^e).** *Cimetière de Père Lachaise, Parc de Belleville,* and quartiers *Belleville* and *Ménilmontant* can be found here.
- **La Défense.** Although it is not officially part of the city, this skyscraper district on the western edge of town is on many visitors must-see lists for its modern architecture and public art.

Beyond central Paris, the outlying suburbs are called *Les Banlieues*. Schematically, those on the west of Paris (Neuilly, Boulogne, Saint Cloud, Levallois) are wealthy residential communities. Those to the northeast are lower-class immigrant communities with high delinquency; keep in mind, though, that this is a very general classification.

Understand

History

Paris started life as the Celto-Roman settlement of *Lutetia* on the Île de la Cité, the island in the Seine currently occupied by the *Cathédral de Notre Dame*. It takes its present name from name of the dominant Gallo-Celtic tribe in the region, the *Parisii*. At least that's what the Romans called them, when they showed up in 52 BCE and established their city *Lutetia* on the left bank of the Seine, in what is now called the "**Latin Quarter**" in the 5th arrondissement.

The Romans held out here for as long as anywhere else in the Western Empire, but by 508 CE they were gone, replaced by **Clovis of the Franks**, who is considered by the French to have been their first king. Clovis' descendants, aka the Carolingians, held onto the expanded Lutetian state for nearly 500 years through Viking raids and other calamities, which finally resulted in a forced move by most of the population back to the islands which had been the center of the original Celtic village. The Capetian Duke of Paris was voted to succeed the last of the Carolingians as King of France, insuring the city a premier position in the medieval world. Over the next several centuries Paris expanded onto the right bank into what was and is still called *le Marais* (The Marsh). Quite a few buildings from this time can be seen in the 4th arrondissement.

The medieval period also witnessed the founding of the Sorbonne. As the "University of Paris", it became one of the most important centers for learning in Europe -- if not the whole world, for several hundred years. Most of the institutions that still constitute the University are found in the 5th, and 13th arrondissement.

In the late 18th century there was a period of political and social upheaval in the political history of France and Europe as a whole, during which the French governmental structure, previously a monarchy with feudal privileges for the aristocracy and Catholic

clergy, underwent radical change to forms based on Enlightenment principles of nationalism, citizenship, and inalienable rights. Notable events during and following the revolution were the storming of the Bastille 4th arrondissement, and the rise and fall of Napoleonic France. Out of the violent turmoil that was the French Revolution, sparked by the still known *Passion des Francais*, emerged the enlightened modern day France.

The Paris, which most visitors know and love was built long after the Capetian and later, the Bourbon Kings of France made their mark on Paris with such buildings as the *Louvre* and the *Palais Royal*, both in the 1st. They were gone in the 19th century when Baron von Hausmann reconstructed adding the long straight avenues, and replacing many of the then existing medieval houses, with grander and more uniform buildings.

New wonders arrived during *la Belle Époque*, as the Parisian golden age of the late 19th century is known. Gustave Eiffel's famous tower, the first metro lines, most of the parks, and the streetlights (which are partly believed to have given the city its epithet "the city of light") all come from this period. Another source of the epithet comes from *Ville Lumière*, a reference not only to the *then* revolutionary electrical lighting system implemented in the streets of Paris, but also to the prominence and aura of *Enlightenment* the city gained in that era.

The twentieth century was hard on Paris, but thankfully not as hard as it could have been. Hitler's order to burn the city was thankfully ignored by the German General von Choltitz who was quite possibly convinced by a Swedish diplomat that it would be better to surrender and be remembered as the savior of Paris, than to be remembered as its destroyer. Following the war, the city recovered at first, but slowed in the 1970s and 1980s when Paris began to experience some of the problems faced by big cities everywhere: pollution, housing shortages, and occasionally failed experiments in urban renewal.

During this time, however, Paris enjoyed considerable growth as a multi-cultural city, with new immigrants from all corners of the world, especially *La Francophonie*, including most of northern and western Africa as well as Vietnam and Laos. These immigrants brought their foods and music, both of which are of prime interest for many travelers. Today there are more nationalities represented in Paris than even in New York (over 100).

Immigration and multi-culturalism continues in 21st century with a marked increase in the arrival of people from Latin America, especially Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil. In the late 1990s it was hard to find good Mexican food in Paris, however, today there are dozens of possibilities from lowly *taquerias* in the outer *arrondissement* to nice sit-down restaurants on the boulevards. Meanwhile Latin music from Salsa to Samba is all the rage (well, alongside Paris lounge electronica).

The 21st century has also seen vast improvements in the general livability of Paris, with the Mayor's office concentrating on reducing pollution and improving facilities for soft forms of transportation including a huge network of cycle paths, larger pedestrian

districts and newer faster metro lines. Visitors who normally arrive car-less are the beneficiaries of these policies as much as the Parisians themselves are.

Get in

By plane

Paris is served by three international airports - for more information, including arrival/departure times, check the official sites.

Charles de Gaulle International Airport (CDG) to the northeast of the city is one of the major hub airports of Europe. It's notoriously confusing, so allow plenty of time for transfers. There are three terminals: Terminal 1, Terminal 2 (which is huge and subdivided into 2A through 2F), and Terminal 3 (formerly T9). Terminal 1 and 3 are next to each other, whereas mass Terminal 2 is in another building. The free CDGVAL shuttle train connects the terminals together. Everything at this airport is very expensive, especially the basics such as food. There are also hardly any benches around, and don't even consider looking for an outlet to charge your cell phone or laptop.

<http://www.aeroportsdeparis.fr/ADP/fr-fr/Passagers/>

When you arrive at CDG, you should write somewhere on your itinerary what terminal you arrived at (2A, 2D, etc.), because when you come back to the airport to depart at the end of your trip, the RER subway train makes two stops at CDG to cover the three terminals, but there are no indications of which airlines are at which terminals. (Nor are there such signs inside the airport itself.)

For getting to or from Paris, the RER subway train, line B, has stations in T3 (from where you can take the free CDGVAL shuttle train to T1) and T2; trains to Paris (the stops are Gare du Nord, Châtelet-Les Halles, Saint-Michel Notre-Dame, Luxembourg, Porte Royale, and Rochechouart) leave every 15 minutes, and there is an express train every hour. Tickets cost €8,50 (or €5,50 for a child's fare) each and take around 40 minutes (or less if an express train), making this the fastest and cheapest way to connect. Buy tickets with credit cards or euros at the "Billetes" machines, or you can get in line to buy them from a human cashier. From the trains area, stations 11/12 are where the RER to Paris stops; you may want to ask to make sure this has not changed. You're in the right place if there's a sign saying, "All trains go to Paris". When using the ticket to the airport (and with tickets to zones outside of Paris) use it to enter **and** exit the train. Always keep the ticket handy as the SNCF officials sometimes check for tickets, and if you are without one you will be fined a hefty fare of €40.

Alternatively, the *Roissybus* service connects all terminals directly to Opéra Garnier in central Paris, but it's subject to traffic jams and rush hour, so it averages 60-90 minutes even on a good day. There is also a TGV station in T2 for high-speed connections, mostly towards Lille and Brussels, but there are also some trains that head south to eg. Rennes and Nantes, bypassing Paris.

Orly International Airport (ORY) to the southwest of the city, and served by a southern branch of the RER-B line that heads in the direction of Saint-Rémy-les-Chevreuse (**not** Robinson). This older international airport is used mainly by Air France for national lines, and other international carriers in Europe. Orly is roughly forty minutes from Paris via the **OrlyBus**, which departs from Métro Denfert-Rochereau (ligne 6); the price is €6. Another option is bus 285 that takes you to the Métro Villejuif - Louis Aragon (ligne 7) in 15 minutes. Bus 285 costs €1,5 and runs every 10 minutes, stopping at airport level -1. <http://www.aeroportsdeparis.fr/ADP/fr-fr/Passagers/>

The **Orlyval** light rail connects both terminals to the RER B line at Antony. It runs every 4-7 minutes and cost €9.30 for transfer to Paris. The RER B from Antony runs through Paris to Aéroport Charles de Gaulle.

Beauvais (Aéroport de Paris Beauvais Tillé (**BVA**) to way north of the city, is a smaller regional airport that is used by some low-cost carriers such as Ryanair. The airport operates a shuttle service connecting with the *Métro* at *Porte Maillot* station. Buses run even during the wee hours of the morning (~ 6 am). Buses leave 20 minutes after each flight arrives, and a few hours before each flight departs. Exact times can be found on the Beauvais Airport website. The journey will take about an hour in good traffic conditions. <http://www.aeroportbeauvais.com/index.php?lang=eng>

In addition to public transport, Air France operates shuttles between Charles de Gaulle and Paris, Orly and Paris and between the two airports. Note that if you have connecting Air France flights that land and depart from different airports, you would still generally need to fetch your luggage after landing, catch either the Air France shuttle or a taxi (readily available at all airports) to the other airport and check-in again. This altogether could take up to 2 hours particularly if traffic is at its worse. It is also common to lose time during disembarking, as passengers often need to get off at the tarmac and get on buses that will bring them to the terminal building. Be sure to have sufficient time between flights to catch your connection. Note that check-in counters usually close 30 minutes before the flight departs, longer if flights are international carriers.

If you arrive to CDG Airport at night you'll need a Noctilien bus to get to the city center. The bus stops in all three terminals (in terminal 2 it will be the second level in departure section - it is very difficult to find, but it really exists). The bus leaves every 30 minutes after 00:30, see timetable. http://www.ratp.info/horaires/index.php?etape=choix_noct The buses you'll need are N121 and N120.

By train



Paris is well connected to the rest of Europe by train. There are several stations serving Paris. You will probably want to know in advance at which station your train is arriving, so as to better choose a hotel and plan for transport within the city.

- **Gare du Nord**, (10th), *Métro: Gare du Nord* - TGV trains to and from Belgium, the Netherlands, and Cologne, Germany (Thalys), and the United Kingdom (Eurostar) and regular trains from Northern Europe.
- **Gare d'Austerlitz**, (13th), *Métro: Gare d'Austerlitz* - regular trains to and from the center and southwest of France (Orléans, Limoges, Toulouse the long way), Spain and Portugal and arrival of majority of the night trains.
- **Gare de l'Est**, (10th), *Métro: Gare de l'Est* - ICE/TGV to and from Saarbrücken, Frankfurt, and Stuttgart in Germany and Basel and Zurich in Switzerland.
- **Gare de Lyon**, (12th), *Métro: Gare de Lyon* - regular and TGV trains to and from Southern and eastern France: French Alps, Marseille, Lyon, Dijon, Switzerland: Geneva, Lausanne and Italy.
- **Gare St Lazare**, (8th) *Métro: St-Lazare* - trains to and from Basse-Normandie, Haute-Normandie.
- **Gare Montparnasse**, (15th), *Métro: Montparnasse-Bienvenue* - TGV and regular trains to and from the west and south-west of France (Brest, Rennes, Nantes, Bordeaux, Toulouse the fastest way and Spain).

The SNCF (French National Railway Authority) operates practically all trains within France excluding the Eurostar to London and the Thalys to Brussels and onward to the Netherlands and Germany. There are also a few local lines of high touristic interest, which are privately owned. All SNCF, Eurostar and Thalys tickets can be bought in railway stations, city offices and travel agencies (no surcharge). The SNCF website is very convenient to book and buy tickets up to two months in advance. There are significant discounts if you book early. To get the best rates you should book at least four weeks ahead. Surprisingly, round trip tickets (*aller-retour*) with a stay over Saturday night can be cheaper than a single one-way ticket (*aller simple*). A very limited selection of last minute trips are published on the SNCF website every Tuesday, with discounts of more than 50%. http://www.sncf.com/en_EN/flash/

There are a number of different kinds of high speed and normal trains:

- TER. Regional trains and normal day or night trains (no special name) operate to and from most cities in France and are usually your best bet for destinations all over France. These are the trains you'll find yourself on if you have a **Eurail pass**, and don't want to pay extra for reservations. <http://wikitravel.org/en/Eurail>
- TGV, The world-famous French high-speed trains (*Trains à Grande Vitesse*) run several times a day to the Southeast Nice(5-6h), Marseille (3h) and Avignon (2.5 h), the East Geneva (3h) or Lausanne, Switzerland and Dijon (1h15) , the Southwest Bordeaux (3h), the West Rennes (3h) and the North Lille (less than 1h). Eurostar to London (2h15) and Thalys to Brussels (1h20) use almost identical trains. <http://www.tgv.com/>
- Thalys, A high-speed train service running daily to/from the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany - it can be a bit expensive compared to normal trains. <http://www.thalys.com/>
- **Intercity**. Intercity trains leave for all parts of Europe, including overnight trains to San Sebastian in Spain, Porto and Lisbon in Portugal.
- **Eurostar**, The Eurostar service connects Paris with London directly and Brussels indirectly, as well many other destinations indirectly through the various west European rail services. Travel time between Paris and London St Pancras International currently averages at 2 hours 15 minutes. <http://www.eurostar.com/dynamic/index.jsp>

By bus

- **Eurolines** is a TransEuropean bus company that offers trips to Paris. <http://www.eurolines.com/index.php?id=113&L=0>

By car

Several *autoroutes* (expressway, motorway) link Paris with the rest of France: A1 and A3 to the north, A5 and A6 to the south, A4 to the east and A13 and A10 to the west. Not surprisingly traffic jams are significantly worse during French school holidays.

The multi-lane highway around Paris, called the *Périphérique*, is probably preferable to driving through the center. Another beltway nearing completion *La Francilienne* loops around Paris about 10 km further out from the *Périphérique*.

It is advised not to drive in the Paris Metro Area. It is better to drive to a metro station with a parking lot and then use the metro to continue your trip throughout Paris. Most of Paris' roads were created long before the invention of automobiles. Traffic inside the city tends to be heavy, especially at rush hour, driving however may be rather easy and efficient in the evening; parking also is difficult. Also, the medieval nature of parts of the city's street system makes it very confusing, and traffic will almost never allow one to

stop or slow down to get one's bearings. If you are unfamiliar with the streets and still insist on driving in the city, make sure you have a navigator in the passenger seat with you.

Get around

By car

It is generally a bad idea to rent a car to visit Paris. Traffic is very dense, and parking tends to be difficult. This is especially true in areas surrounding points of touristic interest, since many of these are in areas designed long before automobiles existed. Many Parisian households do not own cars.

Driving may be an option for going to some sights in the suburbs such as Vaux-le-Vicomte castle or the castle and city at Fontainebleau, or for starting to other places in France. You may prefer to rent from a location not situated in Paris proper.

Note that the driving rules in Paris differ greatly from most English-speaking countries. The major difference is that at roundabouts, traffic entering the roundabout has the right-of-way, unless the roundabout entrances are signposted otherwise: "*Vous n'avez la priorité*". Unless you see that sign when entering a roundabout, you must prepare to give way/yield to all traffic entering the roundabout. This is the opposite from what occurs in the UK, Australia and other English-speaking countries. However, it's not the case in France (except Paris) where roundabouts have usual priority rules.

On foot

Directions

If you find yourself lost in the streets, a good idea is to find the nearest Hotel and ask the concierge for directions. Most speak English well. A simple "*Bonjour Monsieur, parlez-vous anglais?*" should suffice.

Walking in Paris is one of the great pleasures of visiting the City of Light. It is possible to cross the entire city in only a few hours, but only if you can somehow keep yourself from stopping at numerous cafés and shops. In fact within a few years walking combined with biking and the *Metro* will be the *only* way to get around the very center of Paris: The Mayor's office has announced plans to declare the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th arrondissements almost totally car-free by 2012.

The smartest travelers take advantage of the walk-ability of this city, and stay above ground as much as possible. A metro ride of less than 2 stops is probably best avoided since walking will take about the same amount of time and you'll be able to see more of the city.

Paris walking 101

To get a great orientation of the city on foot while seeing many of Paris' major sights, you can do a West to East walk from the Arc de Triomphe to Ile de la Cite (Notre Dame). This walk takes about 1-2 hours without any stops. Start at the top of the Champs Elysees (at the Arc de Triomphe) and begin walking down the Champs Elysees towards Place ('square') de la Concorde.

- On the way towards the obelisk on the square, you'll see the major stores and restaurants of Paris' most famous avenue.
- Once you've passed the main shopping area, you'll see the Petit Palais and the Grand Palais to your right.
- At Place de la Concorde, you'll be able to see many of Paris' major monuments around you. In front of you is the Tuileries, behind you is the Champs-Elysees and Arc de Triomphe, behind you to your right is the Tour Eiffel and Musee d'Orsay, and finally, to your left is the Madeleine.
- Continue straight ahead and enter the Tuileries Gardens passing by

fountains, flowers, and lovers in the park.

- As you continue straight ahead, and out of the garden, you'll see the pyramid entrance to the Louvre directly in front of you.
- With the pyramid directly in front of you, and the Tuileries directly behind you, turn to your right and walk towards the Seine.
- Now you can walk along the Seine (eastwards) until you reach Pont Neuf. Cross Pont Neuf and walk through the Latin Quarter, cross the river again to reach Notre Dame cathedral on Ile de la Cité.

You may have heard of the hazard of walking into dog droppings in Paris. Unfortunately, despite many campaigns to get Parisians to clean up after their dogs, it's still quite true that you have to keep an eye on the sidewalk in front of you. Eventually with a little practice you'll be able to avoid these little packages without effort while looking every way but down, though you may find yourself dancing around fallen leaves in the autumn (some are just the right size and color).

You will also notice that most of the older Parisian streets (especially the ones in the *Quartier Latin*) are particularly narrow with little or no room to even fit a car, so the sidewalks on these roads are extremely tiny. Although this means you would opt to walk on the road, be wary as Parisian drivers, taxi drivers in particular, take no heed in the narrowness of the road, and will drive down it as fast as if they were driving along a major road.

It's always fun to experience the city by foot, and there are numerous walking tours around Paris, whether self guided (with the help of a guidebook) or with a touring guide (booked through your travel agency or hotel). The city is best explored by foot, and some of the most marvelous memories you will have of Paris is walking through secret found places.

By métro

Paris has an excellent underground train system, known as the *Métro* (short for *Chemin de Fer Métropolitain* i.e. Metropolitan Railways). Although you will probably take the RER subway train from the airport to Paris, don't be confused: RER isn't the name for "French subway train", and only a few large stations service the RER network of trains. You'll want to look for the Métro stations, marked with a large "M" sign.

There are 16 Métro lines (*lignes*) (1-14, 3bis and 7bis) on which trains travel all day at intervals of a few minutes between 5 AM and 12:30AM (Saturday night/Sunday morning: 01:30), stopping at all stations on the line. Times for trains can be seen on an electronic scrollboard above the platform. Line 14, which is fully automated, is called the *Météor*. Scheduled times for first and last trains are posted in each station on the center sign.

The lines are named according to the names of their terminal stations (those at the end of the line). If you ask the locals about directions they will answer something like : take line number *n* toward "end station 1", change at "station", and take the line *nm* toward "end station 2" etc. The lines are also color-coded.

In addition there are 5 train lines called RER A, B, C, D, E. RER trains run at intervals of about 6 - 7 minutes, and stop at every station **within** Paris. Although a regular subway ticket can be used within Paris (Zone 1), it is necessary to pass the ticket through the turnstile when passing between the subway and the RER lines, as the two systems are separate networks. This ticket is necessary to both *enter* and *exit* the RER networks, as the RER trains travel on to the Parisian suburbs, outside the zone where a regular subway ticket can be used. Beware that traveling outside the city center without a valid RER ticket will get you fined, and the packs of inspectors who roam the system show no mercy to tourists pleading ignorance. In particular, CDG airport is *not* within the city, and you'll need to purchase a more expensive RER ticket to get there.

For travel outside of the Paris zone, the train arrival times are shown on a monitor hanging from the ceiling inside the RER station above the platform. Information about the stops to be made by the next train is presented on a separate board also hanging from the ceiling. It is important to check this board before boarding the train, as not all trains make stops at all stations on a given line.

RATP is responsible for public transport including metro, buses, and some of the high-speed inter-urban trains (RER). The rest of the RER is operated by SNCF. However, both companies take the same tickets, so the difference is of little interest for most people except in case of strikes (because RATP may strike while SNCF does not, or the other way round). Current fares can be found at their website. Basically, as you move further from Paris (ie into higher zones), tickets get more expensive.

<http://www.eurostar.com/dynamic/index.jsp>

A 1-day ticket, a weekly pass, and a monthly pass are also available. The price varies according to the zones for which the ticket can be used. The cheapest 1-day ticket called *Mobilis*, is valid for zones 1-2. Once bought, it is necessary to write in the spaces provided on the ticket: 1) the date the ticket is being used **in European notation of day/month/year** (Valable le), 2) the last name (Nom), and 3) and the first name (Prénom). Unfortunately, this ticket is not valid for use for travel to/from Charles de Gaulle airport. http://www.ratp.info/informer/tarif_tourisme.php#mobilis



Map of Paris Métro

If you're staying a bit longer, the weekly and monthly passes are called Carte Orange (1 week pass, for Paris and inner suburbs), and the monthly Carte Orange Mensuelle (1 month pass). Note that an *Hebdomadaire* (*eb-DOH-ma-DAYR*) starts on Mondays and a Mensuelle on the first of the month. The Carte Orange is non-transferable, and therefore requires the user to provide information on the pass after the sale. The Carte Orange is sold as refill of a "Navigo Découverte" no contact pass. You must write your last name (nom), your first name (prénom) and stick your photo on the nominative card. After, you have to refill your pass with a *Carte Orange Hebdomadaire* (1 week pass), or a *Carte Orange Mensuelle* (1 month pass). You have to choose at least two of the contiguous "zones" : Paris is first the zone 1, La Défense is in the third zone, Versailles in the fourth,... Everything related to a "Navigo" pass is in purple (eg. the target for the pass in the turnstiles).

Although not as good a deal for adults in most cases as the Mobilis or Carte Orange, there are also 1 to 5 day tourist passes, called Paris Visite available, which are a bargain for kids of ages 4 to 11, starting at €4.25 per day for travel within zones 1-3.

Keep your métro ticket or pass with you at all times, you may be checked or "controlled". You will be cited and forced to pay on the spot. Although the most likely spots for controls are at big métro stations or during métro line change "*correspondences*", it is not uncommon for "*controleurs*" to check tickets on trains. RATP agents may be present in the metro stations even on Sunday night.

Métro stations have both ticket windows and automatic vending machines. The majority of automatic vending machines take *only* coins or European credit cards with a pin-

encoded chip on the front. Therefore, to use either Euro bills or a non-European credit card with a magnetic stripe, it is necessary to make the purchase from the ticket window.

Avoid suburban charges

If you have any tickets or Carte Orange for zone 1-2 ("inside" Paris area: the lower rate) and want go to La Defense from Chatelet, you have to take the metro (line 1). You can take the RER A (and save a few minutes) but you have to pay an additional fare, because even though you arrive at the same station, the RER exit is supposed to be outside of Paris! On the other hand, métro fares are the same, even in the suburbs. So be careful, there are usually a lot of ticket examiners present when you get off the RER A.

Each station displays a detailed map of the surrounding area with a street list and the location of buildings (monuments, schools, places of worship etc) as well as exits for that particular metro. Maps are located on the platform if the station has several exits or near the exit if there is only one.

When the train arrives, the doors may not open automatically. In such a case, there are handles located both inside and outside the train that you have to push, or unlatch in order to open the door.

By boat

There are several excellent boat services, which makes use of the Seine. As well as providing easy, cheap transport to much of central Paris, excellent photo opportunities abound. You can buy a day or 3 day ticket and hop on and off the boat as needed. The boats take a circular route from the Eiffel Tower, down past the Louvre, Notre Dame, botanical gardens then back up the other bank past Musee D'Orsay. Batobus offers a regular shuttle service between the main touristic sights; other companies such as the famous Bateaux Mouches offer sightseeing cruises.

On Skates

Paris is the mecca of city skating. This is due to the large, smooth surfaces offered by both the pavements and the roads. Skating on the pavement is legal all around Central Paris (zone 1) and its suburbs (zone 2+). See our **Do** section below for more information.

By bicycle

Renting a bike is a very good alternative over driving or using public transport. Riding a bike anywhere in the city is far safer for the moderately experienced cyclists than almost any town or city in the United States. The French are very cognizant of cyclists, almost to a point of reverence. A few years ago Paris wasn't the easiest place to get around by bike. That however has changed dramatically in recent years, starting perhaps with a lengthy bus and traffic jam. The city government has taken a number of steps in strong support of improving the safety and efficiency of the urban cyclist as well, in establishing some separated bike lanes, but even more important a policy of allowing cyclists to share the ample bus lanes on most major boulevards. Paris also has many riversides that are perfect for cycling. The Paris bike network now counts over 150 km of either unique or shared lanes for the cyclist. In addition, the narrower, medieval side streets of the central arrondissements make for rather scenic and leisurely cycling, especially during off-hours of the day when traffic is lighter. Do remember to bring a good map, since there is no grid plan to speak of and almost all of the smaller streets are one-way.

Note that, while the streets of Paris are generally fairly easy on novice cyclists, there are some streets in the city that should be avoided by those who do not have sufficient urban cycling experience. 'Rue de Rivoli', 'Place de la Bastille', and 'Place de la Nation' are particularly hairy, especially during weekdays and the Saturday evening rush, and should not be navigated by anyone not confident in their ability to cycle in heavy traffic. 'Avenue des Champs-Élysées', 'Place de l'Étoile', and 'Voie Georges Pompidou' (the lower-level express lanes along the banks of the Seine) should be avoided at all times.

You can find an excellent map of the bike network called *Plan des Itinéraires cyclables* at the information center in the *Hôtel de Ville*.

There are two different bike rental programs in Paris:

- **Vélib**, 01 30 79 79 30, In July 2007 the municipality of Paris introduced the **Vélib** program ("vélo Liberté" or Freedom Bikes) by which it is possible to rent a bike for a very modest price. Numerous stations are to be found around the city (at major landmarks and metro stations); with your credit card (although sadly at this writing many American cards do not work at the machines), you can subscribe for 1 day or 7 days, there is a security fee on the bicycle (to pay for it if it isn't returned) & then get a bike; the first 30 mn are free, following 30 mn costs 1€, following 30 mn cost 2€, etc. to avoid long rentals... so the game is to get to another station in 25 mn & get another bicycle (you will have to wait for 5 minutes before you get another one, though). This rental system has been designed to allow you to "pick & drop" a bike, not rent the same one all day long. Try it ! If your card works in the machines it's a great way to get around! The

bicycles are wonderful cruiser bikes, with a front basket to put a purse or bag.

- In addition to operating a number of bike rental buses, the RATP has some permanent locations, including:
- **Roue Libre, Les Halles**, 1 passage Mondétour (facing 120 rue Rambuteau, Métro: Les Halles), +33 8 10 44 15 34, 9AM-7PM. Bikes can be rented for one weekend, Monday to Friday, a working day, or one day in the weekend.
- **Roue Libre, Bastille**, 37 blvd Bourdon (Métro: Bastille), +33 1 44 54 19 29, 9AM-7PM. Bikes can be rented for one weekend, Monday to Friday, a working day, or one day in the weekend.

Another possibility for renting a bicycle is **Fat Tire** bike tours. See the listing under **Do** below.

By bus

Since the Métro is primarily structured around a "hub and spoke" model, there are some journeys for which it can be quite inefficient, and in these cases it is worth seeing if a direct bus route exists, despite the complexity of the bus network. A bus ride is also interesting if you want to see more of the city. The Parisian bus system is quite tourist-friendly. It uses the same single-ride tickets and Carte Orange as the Métro, and electronic displays inside each bus tell riders its current position and what stops remain, eliminating a lot of confusion.

These same payment devices are also valid in the *Noctilien*, the night bus, where tickets normally cost €2.70. Noctambus routes all begin hourly at Chatelet and run to outlying areas of greater Paris. It pays to know one's Noctambus route ahead of time in case one misses the last Métro home. Women travellers should probably avoid taking the Noctambus on their own.

Another option for travelers who want to see the sights of Paris without a stop on every street corner is the **Paris L'Open Tour Bus**. An open topped double decker bus that supplies headsets with the most up to date information on the attractions in Paris. Your ticket is good for 4 routes ranging in time from 1-2 hours. Get off when you want, stay as long as you need, get back on the bus and head for another site. You can purchase tickets at the bus stop.

By taxi

Taxis are comparatively cheap especially at night when there are no traffic jams to be expected. There are not as many as one would expect, and sometimes finding a taxi can be challenging. In the daytime, it is not always a good idea to take a taxi, as walking or taking the metro (*See: Métro*) will often be faster. If you know you will need one to get to the airport, or to a meeting, it is wise to book ahead by phone.

To stop a taxi...

... watch the sign on the roof: if the white sign is lit, the cab is on duty and available, if the white sign is off and a colored light is lit under it (blue, orange), it's on duty *and* busy, if the white sign is off and no colored light is on, the taxi is off duty.

Remember if a taxi is near a 'taxi station', they're not supposed to pick you up *except* at the station where there may be people waiting for a taxi. Taxi stations are usually near train stations, big hotels, hospitals, and large crossings.

There are a number of services by which you can call for taxis or make a reservation in advance:

- Taxis de France <http://www.taxis-de-france.com/>
- Taxi-Paris, +33 6 0760 4914 <http://www.taxis-de-france.com/>
- Shuttle Taxi <http://www.shuttle-paris.com/>
- Taxis Bleus <http://www.taxis-bleus.com/>

As in many other cities a taxi can be difficult to stop; you may have to try several times. When you do get a taxi to stop, the driver will usually roll down his window to ask you where you want to go. If the driver can't (or doesn't want to) go where you want, he might tell you that he's near the end of his work day & can't possibly get you where you want before he has to go off-duty.

There is a €5.50 minimum on all taxi rides, mandated by city law, but the meter does not show this amount, which can result in being asked to pay more than the metered amount on short rides. Frequently the taxi driver will not want to drive you all the way to the doorstep, but will prefer to let you out a block or so away if there are one or more one-way streets to contend with. Try to look at this as a cost-savings rather than an inconvenience. You should pay while still seated in the cab as in London and *not* through the front window New York style.

The driver will not let you sit in the front seat (unless there are 3 or 4 of you, which is a rare case usually expedited by more money). Taxi-drivers come in all types, some nice, some rude, some wanting to chat, some not. Smoking in taxis is generally not allowed, however it might be that the taxi driver himself wants a cigarette in which case the rule might become flexible.

Many drivers prefer that you avoid using your cell phone during the ride; if you *do have* to, make an apologizing gesture & sound, and do make a **short** call.

- A tip is included in the fare price; If you're especially satisfied with the service, you can give something (basically 10%), but you don't *have* to.
- There is an extra charge for baggage handling.

If for any reason you wish to file a complaint about a Paris taxi, take note of the taxi's number on the sticker on the left hand backseat window.

Beware of illegal taxis (see the 'Stay Safe' section).

Talk

In the parts of the city that tourists frequent the most (Tour Eiffel, Le Louvre, Champs-Élysées), the shopkeepers, information booth attendants, and other workers are likely to answer you in English, even if your French is advanced. These workers tend to deal with thousands of foreign-speaking tourists, and responding in English is often faster than repeating themselves in French. This is not the case for the rest of the city.

Reading up

Before you leave you may want to read a book like *French or Foe* by Polly Platt or *Almost French* by Sarah Turnbull — interesting, well written records from English speaking persons who live in France.

For most people English is something the Parisians had to study in school, and thus seems a bit of a chore. People helping you out in English are making an extra effort, sometimes a considerable one. Younger people are much more likely to be fluent in English than older people. If it's your first time in France you will have some problems understanding what people are saying (even with prior education in French). They talk fast, swallow some letters, and generally concentrate on the tone and melody of their speech in an effort to make it all sound like beautiful music.

Likewise, the French taught in schools in English-speaking countries tends to be *written* French, which is quite different from spoken French. Indeed, French spoken by native English speakers tends to be really hardly understandable by the French - do not be offended if people ask you to repeat, or seem not to understand you, they do not act out of snobbery. Keep your sense of humor, and if necessary, write down phrases or place names. And remember to speak slowly and clearly. Unless you have an advanced level and can at least sort of understand French Movies you should also assume that it will be

difficult for people to understand what you are saying (Imagine someone speaking English to you in an indiscernible accent, it's all the same).

When in need of directions what you should do is this: find a younger person, or a person reading some book or magazine in English, who is obviously not in a hurry; say "hello" or "*bonjour*"; start by asking if the person speaks English, "Parlez-vous anglais?" (Par-LAY voo An-Glay?) even if he/she's reading something in English, speak slowly and clearly; write down place names if necessary. Smile a lot. Also, carry a map (preferably *Paris par Arrondissement*); given the complexity of Paris streets it is difficult to explain how to find any particular address in any language, no matter how well you speak it. If anything, the person may have an idea as to the place you are looking for, but may not know exactly where it may be, so the map always helps.

On the other hand you will probably get the cold shoulder if you stop a random person in the métro (like, say, some middle-aged hurried person who has a train to take), fail to greet them and say "where is place X or street Y".

Now if you *do* speak French, remember two **magic phrases** : "Excusez-moi de vous déranger" [es-KOO-zay mwa duh voo DAY-ranj-AY] ("Sorry to bother you") and "Pourriez-vous m'aider?" ("Could you help me?") — use them liberally - especially in shops; they will work wonders.

See

One of the best value and most convenient ways to see the sights of Paris is with the *Paris Museum Pass* (previously known as *Carte Musées et Monuments*), a pre-paid entry card that allows entry into over 70 museums and monuments around Paris and comes in 2-day (€30), 4-day (€45) and 6-day (€60) denominations (prices as of March 2007). The card allows you to jump otherwise sometimes lengthy queues and is available from participating museums, tourist offices, Fnac branches and all the main Métro and RER train stations. You will still need to pay to enter most special exhibitions.

http://www.intermusees.fr/flash/hp_fr.html

Note that most museums and galleries are closed on either Monday or Tuesday - check ahead to avoid disappointment! - and most ticket counters close 30 - 45 minutes before final closing.

Also consider the *ParisPass* also a pre paid entry card + queue jumping to 60 attractions including The Louvre, The Arc de Triomphe, as well as a river cruise, open top bus tour, cycle hire and allows free metro & public transport travel. <http://www.paris-pass.com/>

All national museums are open free of charge on the first Sunday of the month; note, however, that this may mean long lines and crowded exhibits. Keep away from Paris during Easter week. It's really crowded. People have to queue up at the Eiffel tower for several hours.

These listings are just some **highlights** of things that you really should see if you can during your visit to Paris. The **complete listings** are found on each individual district page (follow the link in parenthesis).

A good listing of almost everything to do in Paris are the 'Periscope', the 'Officiel des spectacles', and the much hipper 'Zurban', weekly magazines listing all concerts, stage plays and museums. Available from many kiosks. Unfortunately, their website is of no use at all. If you prefer a web version, you can visit Cityzeum, with maps of Paris, audio tours to download freely and more than 2000 visit and entertainment points.

Landmarks

- **Arc de Triomphe** (8th). The grave of the unknown soldier is under the arch.
- **Arènes de Lutèce** (5th). Built during the 1st and 2nd centuries, this amphitheater could seat up to 17,000 people, hosting gladiator fights as well as less bloody entertainment. Now a popular spot for playing boules, it is one of the only remaining ruins from the Gallo-Roman era in Paris, along with the Thermes (public baths) at Cluny.
- **Assemblée Nationale** (7th). Seats the French Parliament, and was designed by Giardini and Gabriel in 1728.
- **Catacombs** (14th). Used to store the exhumed bones from the overflowing Paris cemetery.
- **Chateau de Versailles** (Versailles). On the outskirts of the city, the "must see" home of the Sun King Louis XIV.
- the **Eiffel Tower** (*Tour Eiffel*) (7th). One of the most famous landmarks in the world.
- **Grand Arche de la Defense** (La Defense). A modern office-building variant of the Arc de Triomphe. Has a viewing platform.
- **Notre Dame Cathedral** (4th). Impressive Gothic cathedral that was the inspiration for Victor Hugo's novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Saved in the 19th century by the best-known French architect Viollet-le-Duc.
- **Pantheon** (5th). Underneath, the final resting place for the great heroes of the French Republic; above, a marvelous view of the city.
- **Père-Lachaise Cemetery** (20th). See the grave of Jim Morrison amongst many others.

- **Sacré Coeur** (18th). A church perched on top of the highest point in Paris. Behind the church is the artists' area, in front are spectacular views of the whole city.
- **Sainte Chapelle** (1st). Far more beautiful than the famous, but gloomy, Notre Dame. Make sure you go on a sunny day, as the highlight of this small chapel in Rayonnante Gothic style are the large stained-glass windows which soar up to near the vaulted ceiling. Also of interest is the extremely ornate lower level. If it happens to be rainy or cloudy, give Sainte Chappelle a miss, as the play of colored lights on the floor are well worth the wait for a sunnier day.

Museums and galleries

- **Le Musée de l'AP-HP**, (5th). Paris's medical history.
- **Le Musée des Arts Decoratifs**, (1st). Showcasing eight centuries of French savoir faire.
- **Carnavalet** (3rd). [[16]] Museum of Paris history; exhibitions are permanent and free. Noted for its collection of French Revolution artifacts, such as David's famous painting *Serment du Jeu de Paume*. Has Proust's bed and the Dauphin's room in the prison tower diorama. Located in the Marais.
- **Centre Georges Pompidou** , (4th). The great museum of modern art, the building an attraction in itself.
- **Cluny**, (5th). Paris's medieval museum, housed in a part Roman, part medieval building. Entry is now free of charge.
- **Delacroix**, National museum housed in the home of painter Eugene Delacroix.
- **Jacquemart-Andre Museum** , (8th). Private collection of French, Italian, Dutch masterpieces in a typical XIXth century mansion.
- **Picasso Museum**, (3rd). Contains the master's own collections.
- **Les Invalides**, (7th). Museum of arms and armor from the Middle Ages to today. Also contains the tombs of Napoleon Bonaparte and other French military figures.
- **The Louvre**, (1st). One of the finest museums in the world of art, art-history, and culture. Be prepared to walk as this is a fairly large facility and has many rooms to view.
- **Musée de l'Orangerie**, (1st). [Jardin des Tuileries] Impressionist and post-Impressionist paintings by Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, Amedeo Modigliani, Claude Monet, Pablo Picasso, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Henri Rousseau, Chaim Soutine, Alfred Sisley.
- **Musée d'Orsay**, (7th). Home to the great artists of the 19th century (1848-1914).
- **Musée Marmottan-Monet** (16th).[rue Louis Boilly] Collection of works by Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, Edgar Degas, Édouard Manet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir. "Impression Soleil Levant" by Monet is on display in this museum.
www.marmottan.com/
- **Musée National de la Marine**, (16th). From times of exploration to modern day vessels. Interesting but primarily in French.
- **Rodin Museum**, (7th). His personal collection and archives, in a charming hotel and sprawling garden.
- **Musée en Herbe** (1st and 16th). An art museum just for **kids** with hands-on exhibitions and workshops.

Do

- **Fat Tire Bike Tours**, Offers guided English-speaking bicycle tours of Paris (by day and night), Versailles and Monet's Gardens in Normandy. Tours operate year-round at a variety of times each day. Tours offer a great orientation, detailed city information and fantastic photo opportunities. They use California beach cruiser bikes with large comfortable seats. Tours are not the least bit strenuous and all ages are welcome. Their office has an internet cafe, free bathrooms, loads of

information about Paris and free daily luggage storage for their customers. Has been featured in the New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Time, Newsweek and on CNN, the BBC and the Travel Channel.

- **City Segway Tours**, Provides guided English-speaking Segway tours of Paris by day and night. They share an office with Fat Tire Bike Tours and Classic Walks of Paris.
- **Classic Walks of Paris**, Offers guided English-speaking walking tours of Paris. Themed walks include the Classic Walk, Da Vinci Code, Montmartre, Latin Quarter, World War II and French Revolution. They share an office with Fat Tire Bike Tours and City Segway Tours.
- **Bike About Tours**, Shows an insiders look at the 'city of light' with local, English-speaking guides who have lived in Paris for years. This small bike tour company gives 3 tours everyday at 10AM, 3PM, & 7PM from the Charlemagne statue in front of Notre Dame Cathedral. They stay away from the touristy Paris and show you the 'real' Paris.
- **Context Paris**, A network of scholars and specialists (architects, writers, historians, etc.) who lead small-group walking tours of Paris and excursions to other parts of France. A leader in sustainable travel, Context invests heavily in preservation initiatives in Paris and the six other cities where it operates.
- **New Paris Free Walking Tour**, Run by Sandemans New Europe group. Offers free walking tours (tip only basis) of both Paris - the major sights - and Montmartre. Conducted by English speaking guides - mostly Americans - who live, work, or study in Paris.
- **In-line Skating**, Every Friday night and Sunday afternoon (except when raining) hordes of in-line skaters take to the streets of Paris on a preplanned route, for about 3.5 hours. The trip is speedy; you will have to negotiate some real slopes. You must be good at skating if you want to join. Even if you don't participate, find a cafe near the route and watch them fly by.

Events

It seems like there's almost always something happening in Paris, with the possible exceptions of the school holidays in August and February, when about half of Parisians are to be found not in Paris, but in the Alps or the South of France respectively. The busiest season is probably the fall, from a week or so after *la rentrée scolaire* or "back to school" to around *Noël* (Christmas) theatres, cinemas and concert halls book their fullest schedule of the year.

Even so, there are a couple of annual events in the winter, starting with a furniture and interior decorating trade fair called **Maison & Object** in January.

In February *le Nouvel An Chinois* (**Chinese New Year**) is celebrated in Paris as it is in every city with a significant Chinese population. There are parades in the 3rd and 4th arrondissements, and especially in Chinatown in the 13th south of Place d'Italie. Also in February is the **Six Nations Rugby Tournament**, which brings together France, England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Italy.

The first of two Fashion weeks occurs in March: **Spring Fashion Week** giving designers a platform to present women's *Prêt-à-Porter* (ready to wear) collections for the following winter.

The **French Tennis Open** in which the world's top players battle it out on a clay court runs during two weeks starting on the last Sunday in May. By the time it's done in June, a whole range of festivities start up. **Rendez-vous au Jardin** is an open house for many Parisian gardens, giving you a chance to meet real Parisian gardeners and see their creations. The **Fête de la Musique** celebrates the summer solstice (21st June) with this city-wide free musical knees-up.

The French national holiday **Bastille Day** on the 14th of July celebrates the storming of the infamous Bastille during the July Revolution. Paris hosts several spectacular events that day of which the best known is the **Bastille Parade** which is held on the Champs-Élysées at 10am and broadcast to pretty much the rest of Europe by television. The entire street will be crowded with spectators so arrive early. The **Bastille Day Fireworks** is an exceptional treat for travelers lucky enough to be in town on Bastille Day. The Office du Tourisme et des Congrès de Paris recommends gathering in or around the *champs du Mars*, the gardens of the Eiffel Tower.

Also in July, **Cinema en Plein Air** is the annual outdoor cinema event that takes place at the Parc de la Villette, in the 9th on Europe's largest inflatable screen. For most of the months of July and August, parts of both banks of the Seine are converted from expressway into an artificial beach for **Paris Plage**. Also in July the cycling race **le Tour de France** both starts and ends in Paris. Its route varies annually, however it always finishes on the last Sunday of July under the Arc de Triomphe.

On the last full weekend in August, a world-class music festival **Rock en Seine** draws international rock and pop stars to barges on the Seine near moored off of the 8th.

During mid-September DJs and (usually young) fans from across Europe converge on Paris for five or six days of dancing etc. culminating in the **Techno parade** - a parade whose route traces roughly from *Pl. de Bastille* to the *Sorbonne*, and around the same time the festival **Jazz à la Villette** brings some of the biggest names in contemporary jazz from around the world.

The **Nuit Blanche** transforms most of central Paris into a moonlit theme-park for an artsy all-nighter on the first Saturday of October, and **Fashion Week** returns shortly thereafter showing off Women's *Prêt-à-Porter* collections for the following summer; as we've noted winter collections are presented in March.

Movies

The *Cinémas* of Paris are (or at least should be) the envy of the movie-going world. Of course, like anywhere else you can see big budget first-run films from France and elsewhere. That though, is just the start. During any given week there are at least half-a-dozen film festivals going on, at which you can see the entire works of a given actor or director. Meanwhile there are some older cult films like say, *What's new Pussycat* or *Casino Royal* which you can enjoy pretty much any day you wish.

Many non-French movies are subtitled (called "*version originale*" or "v/o"). Still it's probably a good idea to be sure of a movie having subtitles if your French is not adequate to follow fast conversations.

There are any number of ways to find out what's playing, but the most commonly used guide is *Pariscope*, which you can find at newsstands. Meanwhile there are innumerable online guides which have information on "every" cinema in Paris.

Be aware that most of the movies shown in France are dubbed to French. Some shows may have French subtitles.

Learn

It should go without saying that Paris is a good place to learn French.

- **Alliance Francaise.** One of the world's largest schools of French language, the Paris Alliance Française has a wide variety of courses for a visitor to choose from.
- **Université Paris IV.** Offers 'scholastic' as well as 'university' courses for foreigners in French language and culture, which start at various times of year.

Paris is the seat of a great variety of higher education establishments.

- **The American Library** in Paris (5 minutes walking distance from the Eiffel Tower). A great place to visit in Paris is the American Library, this is a non-profit institution entirely dependent on donations in order to keep its doors open. Visitors can purchase a day pass or other short term memberships. The Library has WiFi and if you have your laptop then you can access the internet for no charge other than the day pass to use the library. It has excellent books, recent American magazines and the occasional celebrity patron.

Work

Work in Paris, especially from non-EU citizens entails a very long and arduous process. If you opt for unreported work, such as babysitting, you need not fret about going

through the Green Card process. However, if you do choose a change in location, it is advisable to obtain the Green Card prior to finding any job whatsoever, as the process can be longer than expected.

Before entering the city, one must obtain a visa from their local French Consulate French Embassy. The guidelines for particular visas can be found on their website, and each differ depending on length of stay in France, and what exactly you will be doing while there. When applying for the visa make sure you have ALL your documents prior to your appointment at the French Consulate, otherwise the process, and inevitably, obtaining your visa will be delayed. Always make 2 copies of all the forms, and to have plenty of passport photos ready as the copies will be utilized in each step of the process. If you are going to work in France and are bringing a child along, also bring your child's information for obtaining a visa.

After obtaining a visa (usually a single-entry), you **must** go to your Local Parisian Prefecture as your single-entry visa will expire within 3 months of arrival, and the process in the country is just as long and arduous as the one at the Consulate. Expect to go there multiple times, and always have copies and copies of those copies. The French governmental system is notorious for losing papers, so always have the copies handy when you go for your *follow up*. When you finally do receive your *Carte de Séjour*, or the equivalent of a French green card, you are free to scope out jobs.

Job listings, as anywhere, can be found in local magazines and newspapers. Another great place to look for jobs is online, whether using a *Job Search Engine* such as Monster or Wiki search pages such as Craigslist. Remember, the city of Paris has a huge network of immigrants coming and going, and it is always great to tap into that network. The city holds a great abundance of work ready to be found, even if it feels nerve wracking at first.

Buy

Paris is one of the great fashion centers of the Western world, up there with New York, London, and Milan, making it a shopper's delight. While the Paris fashion scene is constantly evolving, the major shopping centres tend to be the same. High end couture can be found in the 8th arrondissement. In summer, there is nothing better than browsing the boutiques along Canal St-Martin, or strolling along the impressive arcades of the historic Palais-Royal, with beautifully wrapped purchases swinging on each arm.

A good note about *Le Marais* is that as it is a mostly Jewish neighborhood, most of the shops in *Le Marais* are open on Sundays. The stores in this area are intimate and boutique, manifesting as particularly "Parisian" style clothing stores. You will no doubt find something along each street, and is always well worth the look.

Other great areas to shop around in are around the area Sèvres Babylone (Métro ligne 10 and ligne 12). It is in this area you will find afore mentioned Le Bon Marchée 7th, particularly *rue de Cherche Midi* 6th. The area houses some of the major fashion houses

(Chanel, Jean Paul Gaultier, Versace, etc) and also has smaller private boutiques with handmade clothing.

In the *Quartier Saint-Germain-des-Prés*, you can find a handful of vintage clothing shops, carrying anything from couture early 20th century dresses, to 70's Chanel sunglasses. Walking along *Boulevard Saint-Germain*, you will find major brands. However, if in search of eclectic finds, opt to walk the northern side of the Boulevard, especially along *rue Saint André des Arts*, where you can always find a nice café to stop in. The area south of Saint-Germain is just as nice, and comes with a price tag to match.

Flea Markets

Paris has 3 main flea-markets, located on the outskirts of the central city. The most famous of these is the **Marché aux Puces de St-Ouen (Porte de Clignancourt)**(Clignancourt Flea Market) , *Métro: Porte de Clignancourt*, in the 18th, a haven for lovers of antiques, second-hand goods and retro fashion. The best days to go are Saturday and Sunday. Note that there are particular times of the week when only antique collectors are allowed into the stalls, and there are also times of the day when the stall owners take their *Parisian Siesta*, and enjoy a leisurely cappuccino for an hour or so. The best times to visit the Flea Markets are in the spring and summertime, when the area is more vibrant.

Musical Instruments

Rue de Rome, situated near Gare St. Lazare, is crowded with luthiers, brass and woodwind makers, piano sellers, and sheet music stores. Subway station Europe.

Artwork

For art lovers, be sure to check out *Quartier Saint-Germain-des-Prés*, which is notorious for its galleries, and it is impossible to turn a street without finding a gallery to cast your glance in. On Fridays, most open until late. Most even have the benefit of bottles of wine so you can wander in with your glass of wine and feel very *artistique*. Great roads to walk along are *rue de Seine*, *rue Jacob*, *rue des Beaux Arts*, *Rue Bonaparte*, and *Rue Mazarine*.

Eat

Paris is one of Europe's culinary centers. The restaurant trade began here just over 220 years ago and continues to thrive. It may however come as a surprise that Paris isn't considered the culinary capitol of France, rather some people prefer the French cooking found in small rural restaurants, outside of the city, closer to the farms and with their focus on freshness and regional specialties. Even amongst French cities, Paris has long been considered by some people as second to Lyon for fine dining.

There have been other challenges in the last 20 years or so as restaurateurs in places like San Francisco and Sydney briefly surpassed their Parisian fore bearers, again with an emphasis on freshness of ingredients but also borrowings from other cuisines. Parisian cooks didn't just rest on their laurels during this time, rather they traveled, taught, and studied, and together with Paris's own immigrant communities, have revitalized the restaurant trade. Today you can find hundreds of beautiful restaurants with thoughtful (or just trendy) interior design and well-planned and executed *cartes* and *menus* offering a creative *mélange* of French and exotic foreign cuisines. It's safe to say that Paris is once again catching up with or edging ahead of its *Anglophone* rivals.

Of course there are also some traditional offerings, and for the budget conscious there are hundreds of traditional bistros, with their sidewalk *terraces* offering a choice of fairly simple (usually meat centered) meals for reasonable prices.

For the uninitiated, it is unfortunately possible to have a uniformly poor dining experience during a stay in Paris, mainly because many attractions are situated in upscale areas of town, and that mass tourism attracts price gougers. It is frequent to hear of people complaining of very high Parisian prices for poor food and poor service, because they always tried to eat close to major tourist magnets. Try to go eat where the locals eat for good food and great service.

Many restaurants are tiny and have tables close together - square meters are at a premium and understandably restaurateurs need to make the most of limited space. In some cases when the restaurant is crowded, you may have to sit besides strangers at the same table. If you disagree to it, go to a more upscale place where you will pay for increased room.

Trendy restaurants often require reservations weeks, if not months in advance. If you haven't planned far enough ahead, try to get a reservation for lunch which is generally easier and less expensive.

For an easy-to-manage eating budget while in Paris, consider: breakfast or "petit déjeuner" at a restaurant, possibly in your hotel, consisting of some croissants, coffee, and maybe a piece of fruit (this typically costs around \$5 to \$10 depending on the area). Get a 'walking lunch' from one of Paris' many food stands--a *panino* in the center of the city, a crepe from a crepe stand, a falafel pita or take-out Chinese in the Marais. *Traiteurs* serving Chinese food are ubiquitous in the city and good for a cheap lunch and many *patisseries* sell inexpensive coffee and sandwiches. All these are cheap (about the same as breakfast), easy, and allow you to maximize your sightseeing and walking time while enjoying delicious local or ethnic food. For dinner, stroll the streets at dusk and consider a 20-to-40-Euro prix-fixe menu. This will get you 3 or 4 courses, possibly with wine, and an unhurried, candlelit, magical European evening. If you alternate days like this with low-budget, self-guided eating (picnicking, snacking, street food) you will be satisfied without breaking the bank.

If one of the aims of your trip to Paris is to indulge in its fine dining, though, the most cost-effective way to do this is to make the main meal of your day lunch. Virtually all

restaurants offer a good prix-fixe deal. By complementing this with a bakery breakfast and a light self-catered dinner, you will be able to experience the best of Parisian food and still stick to a budget.

Self catering

Budget travelers will be very pleased with the range and quality of products on offer at the open air markets (e.g. the biggest one on Boul Richard Lenoir (near the Bastille), Rue Mouffetard, Place Buci, Place de la Madeleine and over the Canal Saint-Martin in the 11th or in any other arrondissement). If your accommodation has cooking facilities you're set, especially for wine and cheese, a decent bottle of French wine will set you back all of about €3-€5, while the *very good* stuff starts at around €7. Bottles for less than €3 are not recommended. Keep in mind that the small *épiceries* which open until late are more expensive than the *supermarchés* (Casino, Monoprix, Franprix, etc). For wine, the price difference can be up to €2.

Buy a baguette, some cheese and a good bottle of wine and join the Parisian youth for a *pique-nique* along the Seine (especially on the Île Saint-Louis) or along the Canal Saint-Martin. The finest food stores are Lafayette Gourmet in the Galeries Lafayette or La Grande Epicerie in the luxury department store Le Bon Marché. They are worth discovering. You will find a large variety of wines there, otherwise try wine stores such as Nicolas or Le Relais de Bacchus (all over the city).

Some specialties

For **seafood** lovers, Paris is a great place to try *moules frites* (steamed mussels and French fries) (better in fall and winter), oysters, sea snails, and other delicacies. **Meat** specialties include venison (deer), boar, and other game (especially in the fall and winter hunting season), as well as French favorites such as lamb, veal, beef, and pork.

Prices

Eating out in Paris can be expensive. However don't believe people when they say you can't do Paris on the cheap - you can! The key is to stay away from the beaten tracks and the obviously expensive Champs Elysees. Around the lesser visited quarters especially, there are many cheap and yummy restaurants to be found. The key is to order from the Prix-Fixe menu, and NOT off the A la Carte menu unless you want to pay an arm and a leg. In many places a three course meal can be found for about 15 euros, £10, \$20. This way you can sample the food cheaply and is usually more "French". Ask for "une carafe d'eau" (oon karaaf doe) to get free tap water.

The best and cheapest way to get around Paris is on foot, and secondly, using the Metro which is around one euro fifty cents for a one way trip of any length.

In the artsy quarters of 1 and 4, there are many bargains to be had once again, if you are prepared to look. Souvenirs are easily found and can be really inexpensive as long as you

don't buy from the tourist sites. For cheap books of French connection, try the University/Latin quarter as they sell books in all languages starting from half a euro each.

Kosher dining

Paris has the largest number of Kosher restaurants in any European city. Walk up and down Rue des Rosiers to see the variety and choices available from Israeli, Sushi, Italian and others.

Vegetarian dining

For **vegetarians**, eating traditional French food will require some improvisation, as it is heavily meat-based. For fast food and snacks, you can always find a vegetarian sandwich or pizza. Even a kebab shop can make you something with just cheese and salad, or perhaps falafel. Paris has several excellent vegetarian restaurants. Look for spots such as Aquarius in the **4th**, and Le Grenier de Notre-Dame in the **5th**, or La Victoire Suprême du Coeur in the **1st** just to name a few. See the arrondissement pages for more listings.

There are also lots of Italian, Thai, Indian, and Mezo-american places where you will have little problem. In Rue des Rosiers (4th arrondissement) you can get delicious falafel in the many Jewish restaurants. Another place to look for falafel is on Rue Oberkampf (11th arrondissement). Take away falafel usually goes for 4€ or less.

Moroccan and Algerian cooking is common in Paris - vegetarian couscous is lovely. Another good option for vegetarians - are *traiteurs*, particularly around Ledru Rollin (down the road from Bastille) take away food where you can combine a range of different options such as pommes dauphinoise, dolmas, salads, vegetables, nice breads and cheeses and so on.

Lebanese restaurants and snack shops abound as well, offering a number of vegetarian *mezze*, or small plates. The stand-bys of course are hummus, falafel, and baba-ganouche (*caviar d'aubergine*). A good place to look for Lebanese is in the pedestrian zone around Les Halles and Beaubourg in the 1st and 4th.

Tourists and locals

When you are looking for a restaurant in Paris, be a little careful of those where the staff readily speak English. These restaurants are usually - but not always - geared towards tourists. It does make a difference in the staff's service and behavior whether they expect you to return or not.

Sometimes the advertised fixed price tourist menus are a good deal. If you're interested in the really good and more authentic stuff (and if you have learned some words of French) try one of the small bistro where the French go to during lunch time.

Drink

The bars scene in Paris really does have something for everyone. From bars which serve drinks in babies bottle, to ultra luxe clubs that require some name dropping, or card (black Amex) showing, and clubs where you can dance like no one's watching, (although they will be). To start your night out right, grab a drink or two in a ubiquitous dive bar, before burning up the dance floor and spreading some cash, at one of the trendy clubs.

- **Canal St Martin.** Many cozy cafés and other drinking establishments abound around the *Canal St Martin* in the **10th**.
- **The Marais.** The Marais boasts a large number of trendier new bars mostly in the **4th** and to a lesser extent the **3rd** with a few old charmers tossed into the mix. A number of bars and restaurants in the Marais have a decidedly gay crowd, but are usually perfectly friendly to straights as well. Some seem to be more specifically aimed at up-and-coming hetero singles.
- **Bastille.** There is a very active nightlife zone just to the northeast of Place de Bastille centered around *rue de Lappe*, *rue du Faubourg Saint-Antoine* (especially the amazing Club Barrio Latino) and *rue de Charonne* in the **11th**. Many of the bars closest to Bastille have either a North, Central, or South American theme, with a couple of Aussie places mixed in for good measure, and as you continue up *rue de Charonne* the cafés have more of a traditionally French but grungy feeling.
- **Quartier Latin - Odeon.** If you're looking for the *nouvelle vague* (new wave) style, student and intellectual atmosphere of Paris in the 60s and 70s, you'll find a lot of that (and more hip + chique) places in the quartier Latin and between place Odeon and the Seine. The neighborhood is also home of many small artsy cinemas showing non-mainstream films and classics (check 'Pariscope' or 'l'officiel du spectacle' at any newspaper stand for the weekly programme).
- **Rue Mouffetard and environs.** The area in the **5th** on the south side of the hill topped by the Panthéon has a little bit of everything for the nighthawk, from the classy cafés of Place de la Contrescarpe to an Irish-American dive bar just down the way to a hip, nearly hidden jazz café at the bottom of the hill.
- **Châtelet.** In some ways the *Marais* starts here in the **1st** between *Les Halles* and *Hôtel de Ville* but with between all of the tourists and the **venerable Jazz clubs** on *rue des Lombards* the area deserves some special attention.
- **Montmartre.** You'll find any number of cozy cafés and other drinking establishments all around the *Butte de Montmartre* in the **18th**, especially check out *rue des Abesses* near the *Métro* station of the same name.
- **Oberkampf-Ménilmontant.** If you are wondering where you can find the hipsters (*bobos* for bohemian-bourgeois), then look no further. There are *several* clusters of grungy-hip bars all along *rue Oberkampf* in the **11th**, and stretching well into the **20th** up the hill on *rue de Ménilmontant*. It's almost like being in San Francisco's Haight-Fillmore district.
- **Rues des Dames-Batignolles.** Another good place to find the grungy-chic crowd is the northern end of the **17th** around *rue des Dames* and *rue de Batignolles*, and if you decide you want something a little different Montmartre is just around the corner.

- **Port de Tolbiac.** This previously deserted stretch of the river Seine in the **13th** was re-born as a center for nightlife (and Sunday-afternoon-life) a few years ago when an electronic music cooperative opened the **Batofar**. Nowadays there are a number of boats moored along the same *quai*, including a boat with a Caribbean theme, and one with an Indian restaurant.
- **Saint Germain des Prés.** This area boasts two of the most famous cafés in the world: Café de Flore and Les Deux Magots, both catering to the tourists and the snobs who can afford their high prices. This part of the **6th** is where the Parisian café scene really started, and there still are hundreds of places to pull up to a table, order a glass, and discuss Sartre deep into the evening.

For individual bar listings see the various Arrondissement pages under **Get around**.

Of course there are lots of interesting places which are sort of off on their own outside of these clusters, including a few like the **Hemingway Bar at the Ritz** which are not to be missed in a serious roundup of Parisian drinking, so check out the listings even in those arrondissements we haven't mentioned above.

Some nightclubs in Paris that are worth it: Folies Pigalle (pl. Pigalle, 18th, very trash, famous for its after, 20 euros), Rex Club (near one of the oldest cinemas on earth, the Grand Rex, house/electro, about 15 euros cheap). You might also want to try Cabaret (Palais Royal), Maison Blanche, le Baron (M Alma-Marceau). Remember when going out to dress to impress, you are in Paris! Torn clothing and sneakers are not accepted. The better you look the most likely you will get past the random decisions of club bouncers. Also important to remember if male (or in a group of guys) that it will be more difficult to enter clubs, try to always have an equal male/female ratio.

Sleep

Generally one should be aware that Paris hotels, almost without regard to category or price, observe high and low seasons. These differ slightly from one hotel to another, but usually the high season roughly corresponds to late spring and summer, and possibly a couple of weeks around the Christmas season.

Be aware that when a hotel is listed in any guide or website this will eventually make it a bit harder to get a room at that hotel. That means that you will probably need to book ahead, especially in the high season. However, if they don't have a room they sometimes know another place close by that does have a room available.

When with two it can be a much better deal to find a hotel room than to get 2 hostel beds. More privacy for less money.

For individual hotel listings see the various Arrondissement pages under **Get around**.

- For those who are staying for a while renting a furnished apartment might be a more comfortable and money-saving option. Furnished apartments differ

considerably in quality, so it is important to choose carefully. There are a huge number of websites in the business of helping you find one, but most charge a steep commission of 10% or more. There are however a couple of considerably cheaper non-profit options which for whatever reason do not turn up near the top of a Google search.

Stay safe

Crime

Crime in Paris is similar to most large cities, but violent crime is uncommon in the heart of the city. Pickpockets are active on the rail link (RER) from Charles de Gaulle airport to downtown Paris and on the number one metro (subway) line that cuts across the city center east to west servicing many of the major tourist sites. A common scheme is for one thief to distract the tourist with questions or disturbance while an accomplice picks pockets, a backpack or purse. Thieves often time their crime to coincide with the closing of the automatic doors on the metro, leaving the victim secured on the departing train. Many thefts also occur at the major department stores (Galeries Lafayette, Printemps) where tourists leave wallets, passports and credit cards on cashier counters during transactions.

Popular tourist sites are also popular hunting grounds for thieves who favor congested areas to mask their activities. The crowded elevators at the Eiffel Tower, escalators at museums and the area around the Sacre Cœur church in Montmartre are all favored by pickpockets and snatch-and-run thieves. The area around the famous Moulin Rouge is known as Pigalle and best avoided after dark unless with a tour group headed for a show. Pigalle is an adult entertainment area known for prostitutes, sex shows and drugs. Unsuspecting tourists often run up exorbitant bar bills and are forced to pay before being permitted to leave. If you do visit an adult show absolutely do not order any drinks for yourself, or any of the workers, without seeing the bill first. You could pay upwards of 600 Euro for 2 drinks.

The Marché aux Puces (Les Puces) flea market is virtually designed to make pick pocketing easy and gangs can be witnessed spotting victims. Walkways are often crowded, narrow, dark, with no way out except to wait for the extraordinarily-slow walkers to move.

There are some areas, like Barbès (18th), where it's better not to hang around alone at night. In these areas, a lot depends on the way you behave and if you know how to adapt to the situation. If you know what you are looking for, speak some French and feel comfortable, there is no problem strolling around a neighborhood like Barbès. Also some parts of the *banlieue* are better to avoid, but the banlieue is, except for a very few tourist spots (Fontainebleau, Versailles, Basilique de St. Denis) not a place where the ordinary tourist will go anyway.

The metro is relatively safe, but again, pickpockets do work in the stations and on the trains especially near tourist destinations. If you are carrying a bag make sure that it's closed tightly. If you have a wallet in your pocket keep a hand on it while entering or exiting the trains. Don't carry any more cash than you can afford to lose. Keep your cash on different parts of your body: some in your money belt, some in your purse/wallet, some in your shoe. Keep the contents of your purse/wallet to the bare essentials: money, one debit/credit card, I.D., emergency contact information, medical I.D. When you have to access your money belt, do so in private.

Recent news reports have highlighted new tactics by thieves, targeting taxis on their way into the city from Charles de Gaulle airport. Thieves wait for the taxi to be stopped in the usual traffic jam along the A1 highway and break windows to get to the passengers' bags. To avoid this, you may place your bags in the trunk of the taxi or take the very safe Air France shuttle.

You should also beware of illegal taxis. At least one young foreign tourist has been murdered after getting into a car that was not - as she'd believed - an official Parisian taxi.

Beware also of distraught-looking women and children asking if you can speak English. You'll be presented with a card or letter with a story explaining something like "My mother is in hospital in another country terminally ill. I'm stuck in Paris with no money and I need to visit her." You will encounter them at the major train and Métro stations (they are especially prevalent in and around Gare du Nord and Châtelet-Les Halles) and also at most major tourist attractions. Even on the Champs-Élysées. They are also prevalent around the Arc de Triomphe near the Embassy of Qatar.

Some Parisian restaurants, particularly in the tourist-laden Latin Quarter, make a living ripping off tourists who are hampered by a language barrier. When ordering, particularly if ordering a "menu" or prix-fixe meal, point to the actual menu item and ensure you repeat the price. Eye contact works wonders, as does a modicum of conversational French. If the bill does not conform to what you order, complain and leave the restaurant without paying if this does not work.

Beware of touristy areas where there are gambling stands with people playing. They are more than likely to be accomplices of the person manning the booth. They usually play with 3 black rubber coins to guess the one with a white piece of paper stuck underneath. You can never win at that as they switch hands and do not let you open it yourself. If you ever get cheated there, shout at them loudly and refuse to let them go as they usually operate in crowded places.

Another thing to be wary of is people asking where do you come from with strings in their hand. They will make small talk with you while tying a friendship band around your finger. After that they will demand money from you. Sometimes, along the Seine-River, fraudsters "find" a ring which they give to you. This happens especially to young couples and they always hand the ring to the man. This gesture is thought to gain some trustfulness because they do as if they think the ring was yours. They don't want you to

give the ring back. A few moments later they ask you for money to buy something to eat. But it is already too late. It is really hard to get rid of those people then.

Also, be warned to not act big. Fraudsters react unpredictable, sometimes even violent. So take care that you call attention unobtrusively, when you want to tell people that a fraud happens.

Since 2007, it is strictly forbidden to smoke in enclosed areas (train stations, subway stations, buildings), and since 1 Jan 2008, smoking is not permitted in restaurants and bars, except for outside seating areas.

Respect

Paris has, in many respects, an atmosphere closer to that of New York than to that of London, Lyon, or any other European town; that is, hurried, and businesslike. Parisians have a reputation for being rude and arrogant. Some of their reputation for brusqueness may stem from the fact that they are constantly surrounded by tourists, who can sometimes themselves seem rude and demanding.

This is not to say that Parisians are, by nature, rude. On the contrary: there are a considerable number of rules defining what is rude and what is polite in Parisian interpersonal relationships; if anything, the Parisians are *more* polite than most (This should be no surprise, though, when one considers the fact that "*etiquette*" is a French word). Thus, the best way to get along in Paris is to be on your best behavior, acting like someone who is "*bien élevé*" (well brought up) will make getting about considerably easier. Parisians' abrupt exteriors will rapidly evaporate if you display some basic courtesies. A simple "*Bonjour, Madame*" when entering a shop, for example, or "*Excusez-moi*" when trying to get someone's attention, or very important; say "*Pardon*" if you bump into someone accidentally or make other mistakes, will transform the surliest shop assistant into a smiling helper or the grumpiest inhabitant to an helpful citizen. Courtesy is extremely important in France (where the worst insult is to call someone "*mal élevé*", or "badly brought up"). A particularly useful phrase to know is "*Pardonnez-moi de vous déranger, monsieur/madame, mais auriez-vous la gentillesse de m'aider?*" (pardon me for bothering you, sir/madam, but would you have the kindness to help me?) - it's about the closest one can come to a magic wand for unlocking Parisian hospitality. If you know some French, try it!

Like city dwellers everywhere, Parisians generally expect people to speak in a measured voice when in a crowded place. They are likely to look down on people who talk very loudly in a train or subway car. Keep in mind that the people around you in the Métro are *not* on vacation, in general: they are going to or coming back from work and thus may not appreciate another source of headache. In addition, if you are traveling to or from the airport or train station and have luggage with you, make certain that you are not blocking the aisles in the train by leaving your bags on the floor. The RER B (which links both Orly and Charles de Gaulle airports to the city) has luggage racks above the seats; it is

advised that you use them so you do not block the path of a local who is getting off the train before the airport stop.

Also bear in mind that the vast majority of the Parisian population are not in any way connected to the tourism business. You are not in a resort or theme park, with paid personnel meant to give you directions around, but in a city where people have to get on with their lives. But if you ask politely, most of the French will help you if they can.

Be aware that there are hefty fines for littering in Paris.

Contact

One helpful thing about having official and numbered districts in Paris is that you can easily tell which arrondissement an address is in by its postal code, and can easily come up with the postal code for a Paris address if you know its arrondissement. The rule is just pre-pend 750 or 7500 to the front of the arrondissement number, with 75001 being the postal code for the 1st and 75011 being the postal code for the 11th, and so on.

Cope

Although known as the fashion capital, Paris is actually quite conservative in dress. So if you go out in bright colors expect to be stared at, especially dressed like so in certain arrondissements such as 9th and 18th where you may attract unwanted attention of an evening.

Phone cards are available from most "*Tabacs*" but make sure you know where to use them when you buy them, as some places still sell the *cartes cabines* which are hard to work, and *cabines* are rare.

Get out

- **Chartres** - The 12th century cathedral of Notre Dame at Chartres is one of the highlights of Gothic architecture.
- **Versailles** - On the SW edge of Paris, the site of the Sun King Louis XIV's magnificent palace.
- **Saint Denis** - On the northern edge of the metropolis, site of the *Stade de France* and St Denis Abbey, burial place of French royalty.
- **Chantilly** - Wonderful 17th century palace and gardens (and the birthplace of whipped cream).
- **Giverny** - The inspirational house and gardens of the Impressionist painter Claude Monet are but a day-trip away.
- **Disneyland Resort Paris** - In the suburb of Marne-la-Vallée, to the east of Paris, from where it can be reached by car, train, or bus (the train is probably your best bet).

- **Parc Astérix** - North of Paris, may be reached via a shuttle bus from CDG Airport.

For more info see: www.wikipedia.org

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