

Versailles

Versailles is a city on western edge of the French capital city Paris, now part of the sprawling metropolis within the Ile de France region. Versailles is best known for being the site of the vast royal palace and gardens built by King Louis XIV within what was previously a royal hunting lodge. It is also one of the wealthiest neighborhoods near Paris.

<http://www.chateauversailles.fr/en/>

<http://www.mairie-versailles.fr/mapimg.php?id=24&pg=384&lg=eng>

Understand

The Palace of Versailles has been the scene for several historic events, not the least of which was the signing, on 28 June 1919 within the Hall of Mirrors, of the Peace Treaty between defeated Germany and the Allies that brought the First World War officially to an end. The signing of the treaty at Versailles, of course, mirrored the proclamation, in 1871 within the same long hall, of the establishment of the German Empire under the Prussian king, subsequently the Kaiser.

Get in

The easiest way to get to Versailles palace and avoid queue is to buy a Forfait Loisirs ticket: it costs a bit more than the usual entrance ticket but includes railway and metro tickets (to and from), an audio guided tour of the Chapel and Opera House, the King's and Queen's State Apartments, the Dauphin's and the Mesdames' Apartments, the Coach Museum, Trianons and all the temporary exhibitions.

However you can get to the Palace easily by train and buy tickets per attraction once you're there. This may be the best approach if you want to see something in particular or you just want to explore the enormous gardens.

By train

It takes about 40 minutes to reach Versailles from Paris.

There are three different train stations in Versailles: *Versailles Rive Gauche*, *Versailles Rive Droite* and *Versailles Chantiers*. *Versailles Rive Gauche* is the one closest to the Palace (5 minutes by walk), so this is probably the one you want, but you might end up in another station depending on where you come from.

- **RER C** line, direction *Versailles Rive Gauche* (train called **VICK**), gets off at *Versailles Rive Gauche* station. Be careful **not** to get off at *Viroflay Rive Gauche*!

The name looks somewhat the same, but this is not the same station! Another branch of the RER C, direction *Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines*, stops at *Versailles Chantiers*.

- **Paris Montparnasse:** you can take a train to Versailles at *Gare Montparnasse*, but it will stop at *Versailles Chantiers*. *Versailles Rive Gauche* station is only accessible via RER C.
- **Paris Saint Lazare:** suburban trains stop at *Versailles Rive Droite*.

Both Stations are about 5 minutes walk from the entrance of Versailles

By bus

Route 171 travels between *Pont de Sèvres* (at the end of *Métro* line 9) to Versailles. The bus journey from the station to the Chateau takes approximately 25 minutes.

Get around

The main city is easily traversable on foot, however a good network of buses runs throughout. Once inside the palace it's possible to hire both bikes and battery-powered golf carts (see section below).

See

- **Chateau de Versailles**, open daily (except Mondays when the chateau is closed) 9AM-5:30PM November-March, 9AM-6:30PM April-October.

The famous Versailles really is a "must see" location on the western outskirts of Paris. Not only does it have enormous historical significance, it is also a very beautiful building. Do other tourists a favor - do not use your mobile phones inside, it ruins the atmosphere. The rear of the palace also is partially covered by scaffoldings. **If you plan to visit the palace it cannot be stressed enough that getting there earlier is recommended, because the lines stay very long all day.** Even if you have a Paris Museum Pass or similar, you will still be directed to stand in the long line while construction is underway.

- Alternatively, and especially if you have young children, you can gain access to the grounds for a small fee.

Do

- Consider taking an **audio guide** tour of the chateau, available in several languages from various reception points within the palace and grounds. The day pass price includes the audio tour.
- Within the grounds in the summer there are a number of activities including train rides, rowing boat and cycle hire. The mini-train is really the only time efficient

way to get an overview of the entire grounds, which include his and hers residence palaces, which otherwise are at least a 30 minute walk each way from the main palace. The mini-train also stops along the main canal, where there is a cafe and a snack shop. For 30 euros it is also possible to hire a golf-style buggy for one hour in order to explore the expansive grounds.

- The Carte Musées Unlimited Paris Museum Entrance to 70 sites.

See the Paris museums and the interesting sites with one pass, and NO WAITING in line! Unlimited visits to museums and monuments in Paris and in the surrounding Ile de France. The queues are very long and on a hot summers day it is a worthwhile investment.

Eat

Versailles itself (the town) has any number of good places to eat whilst visiting. Once you have made it into the palace grounds, however, it should be noted that it is far more convenient to eat within — the alternative is to hike back into the town, before returning to the Palace (time better spent viewing the rooms and grounds). The grounds are also perfect for picnicking in warm and/or dry weather.

A number of other options exist:

- Within the Château itself, a Café is positioned not far from the Cour de la Chapelle
- Within the Formal Gardens, exists 2 informal restaurants, *La Flotille* and *La Petite Venise*, on Petite Venise (from the Château, head back directly through the Gardens to the start of the canal - Petite Venise and the restaurants can then be found to the right).
- Several kiosks serving snacks and fast food can be found in the Gardens (Bosquet du Dauphin & Bosquet de la Girandole) and the Grand Trianon.

For more info see: www.wikipedia.org

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