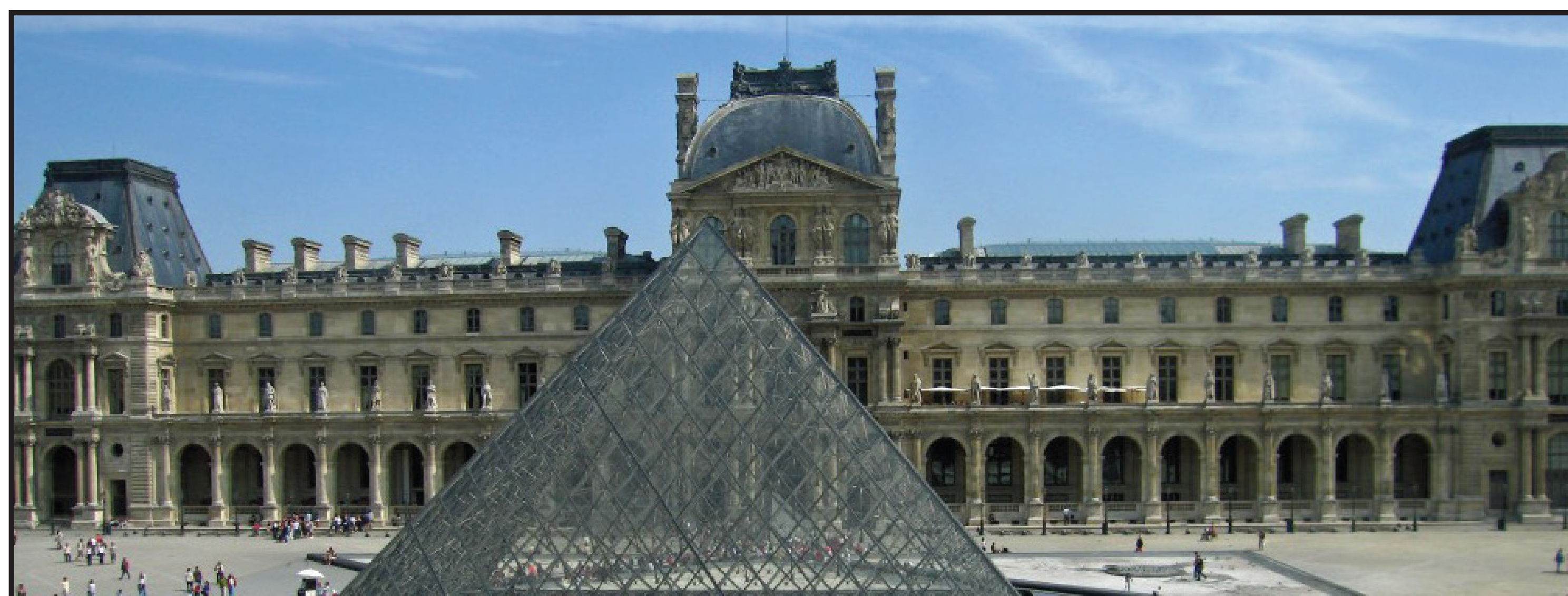




David McGuffin's **EXPLORING EUROPE**



Paris



INDEX

[**Introduction**](#) - 2 pg

[**Practical Information**](#) - 4 pg

[Getting around Paris](#) - 4 pg

[Sightseeing in Style](#) - 9 pg

[Other Useful Information](#) - 10 pg

[Dining in Paris](#) - 10 pg

[Interacting with Parisians](#) - 13 pg

[Key French Phrases](#) - 15 pg

[Maps](#) - 16 pg

[Paris Major Monuments](#) - 16 pg

[The Métro](#) - 17 pg

Things to do in Paris

[Essential Paris Sights](#) - 18 pg

[Shopping](#) - 23 pg

[**Museums, Churches and More**](#) -26 pg

[Museums](#) - 26 pg

[Monuments](#) - 28 pg

[Churches](#) - 32 pg

[Other Sights](#) - 33 pg

[**Paris by Neighborhood**](#) - 38 pg

[Museum Row](#) - 39 pg

[Historic City Center](#) - 40 pg

[The Latin Quarter and Luxembourg Gardens](#) - 43 pg

[Tour Eiffel and Invalides](#) - 48 pg

[The Champs-Élysées and Beyond](#) - 51 pg

[A Final Word of Advice](#) - 55 pg

Introduction

Paris... grand boulevards, boutiques and outdoor cafés, lavish monuments, important museums and of course, romance. For many, a trip to Europe would be incomplete without a stop here, in what has become known as the City of Light. The home of the Mona Lisa, the Eiffel Tower and Quasimodo's cathedral, Paris is a destination in itself, giving the modern-day traveler weeks of tourist options.

Whether you're heading here for the first time or the twentieth, you'll always find something new and exciting. Dive into its ambiance and become an explorer! A visit to neighborhoods such as the **Marais, Montparnasse, Rue Cler,**



[Jump to index](#)

St-Germain or Montmartre will give new insights to the cultural diversity as well as a peek into the everyday life of Parisians.

Climb the Eiffel Tower, stroll the Champs Élysées, marvel at the architecture, see the grand parks or simply sit and enjoy the ambience from a café window. Paris is one of the most memorable destinations in the entire world. Dig in, become a part of it and join the show!

[Budgeting your time](#)

Paris...there is so much to see and do. I've been to this City of Light many times and have yet to experience it all. Simply taking in the "tourist's Paris" could consume a lifetime of trips. But there is good news! I've been here often and made a lot of the common tourist mistakes. This guide is designed to help you have an educated and informed visit. In the Paris by Neighborhood section of this guide, I've broken down a typical Paris tour into small chunks of time, starting with tour options for just one day and ending with my itinerary for an entire week. You'll want to tailor the schedule to your liking, especially when

you have three or more days or have visited here previously.

Getting around Paris

While visiting Paris, plan to use the Métro and RER to effortlessly zip from one neighborhood to the other. Taxis are not a bad choice either, especially for 3-4 people traveling in a group.

The Métro (subway)

The Métro (short for métropolitain) is the quick and easy way to travel around the city. The Paris Métro has over 300 stations so there is always a metro stop no more than a 10-minute walk from any location. Station entrances are marked by a big yellow “M”. There are 14 numbered, color-coded lines. To make sure you are going the right direction, check the train’s final destination. There is always a plaque listing all of the stops on the route before you reach the platform.

Hours of Operation: Most trains run every day from 5:30 until 00:30, and an extra hour on the weekends. If possible, avoid traveling during rush hour (17:00 to 20:00).

Tickets: One ticket will take you anywhere on the Paris Métro and in Zone 1 on the RER system with unlimited transfers. A single ticket costs €1.90. You can save by purchasing a packet of 10 tickets called a carnet (car-nay) for €14.50. There are also day passes called Paris visite. Ticket prices range from €11.65 for one day to €37.25 for five days. Calculate which option is right for you.

Tickets may also be used on city buses and the Montmartre funicular; however, you cannot use the same ticket for a transfer between the metro and a bus/funicular.

You can purchase tickets at any metro station from a French-speaking attendant or from the automatic vending machines. Some machines accept credit/ debit cards.

Etiquette: In stations and passageways, walk to the right and don't stop. On escalators, stand to the right and pass to the left. Don't stand on the left as it blocks the flow of traffic!



[Jump to index](#)

Allow people to exit the train before getting on. Once inside, move down so you don't block the door for other passengers. If the car is jammed-packed, stand-up, don't use the hinged seats by the door. Talk softly on trains, follow the locals' example. Offer your seat to the elderly, pregnant women, handicapped individuals and people traveling with children. Some doors open automatically, some have a button that you push and some have a lever that you push up. The buzzer means that the doors are closing very soon. There is no sensor on the doors. If you are not quick, they will close on you.

[RER \(train\)](#)

The RER, or Regional Express Network, serves Paris and its suburbs. The tickets are priced by zones. Feel free to use your metro tickets on the RER in Zone 1, which encompasses nearly all of Paris. You can also take the RER to destinations beyond Paris, such as Charles de Gaulle airport, Orly airport, Disneyland Paris and Versailles. Just make sure you buy an RER



[Jump to index](#)

ticket from one of the machines that say SNCF. You will need to put in your destination so that you get the right price.

Keep your ticket! Because anyone could get on at any station with a cheap ticket, passengers on RER lines are required to swipe their tickets to get in and to get out of the station. So keep your ticket in a safe place.

Velib' (bikes)

If you're feeling adventurous you can explore Paris by bike. Velib' is a public bike hire scheme for short trips across Paris. There are over 23,000 bikes for hire and 1,800 docking stations, one every 300 meters. You don't need to book in advance. Go to any docking station with your credit or debit card (it must have an embedded chip) to get started. Buy bike access for €1.70 for a one day pass or €8 for a seven-day pass, or buy ahead of time online. You can return the bike to any docking station. If you return the bike within 30 minutes of hiring it, there are no extra ride charges. Extra ride charges apply if you keep a bike for longer than 30 minutes. An extra 30 minutes costs €1, and extra 90 minutes costs €4. For more information and for guided excursions, visit <http://en.velib.paris.fr/>

Metro Terms:

- Direction (dee-rek-ssyon): direction
- Ligne (leen-yuh): line
- Sortie (sor-tee): exit
- Correspondence (kor-res-pohn-dans): transfer
- Carnet (car-nay): discounted set of ten tickets
- Pardon madame/monsieur (par-don mah-dahm/miss-yuh): Excuse me ma'am /sir
- Je descends (juh-day-sahn): I'm getting off.

Taxis

Don't want to deal with the crowds? You can always take a taxi, but there are a few things you should know. In Paris, it is possible to hail a cab, but the easiest way to find one is to go to one of the official taxi stands. These can usually be found near metro stops and outside large tourist attractions (They are also labeled with a T on most maps). Usually a green or white light indicates that the taxi is available, an orange light that it is taken. Taxis are not allowed to stop within 50 meters of a taxi stand or in bus lanes, etc., so don't get frustrated if they aren't stopping for you. Make sure the taxi driver can accept debit or credit cards before you get in, if you don't want to pay with cash. If you call for a cab, the driver has the right to turn the meter on when he leaves to go pick you up, so there could be an additional charge.

Tipping: There are differing schools of thought on this. Most people give at least €1-2 as a tip. Others suggest 5-10%. Use your best judgment.

If it's a quick ride, you can give a small tip. If the driver is nice or helps you with your luggage, consider giving more.

Sightseeing in Style

Hop On Hop Off Buses

On your free day, you may want to buy a pass for a hop on hop off sightseeing bus. There are many options to choose from, but the three main operators are **L'Open Tour**, **Big Bus** and **Foxity**. Foxity also offers a cheaper 2-hour ticket, where you do the whole circuit without getting off the bus. Big bus also offers a free walking tour with the purchase of the bus ticket. The best deals can be found online, but you can also buy tickets directly on the bus.



River cruises

There are several companies that offer river cruises, such as **Bateaux Parisiens** and the iconic **Bateaux-Mouches**. Cruises depart from various locations on the Seine, but you can always find one by the Eiffel Tower (metro: Trocadéro or Champ

de Mars). In addition to sightseeing cruises, these companies offer lunch and dinner cruises and other specialty cruises which usually must be booked in advance.

Other Useful Information

Emergencies

112 is an EU emergency number, so calls can be answered in 40 languages. Additionally, in France dial **15** for a medical emergency, **17** for the police or **18** for the fire department.

Dining in Paris

We all plan to encounter big cultural differences when we travel, but the little things are often a surprise. Here are a few little quirks to be aware of when dining in Paris.

Drinks

There are **no free refills**. When you order soda, it will come in a can or a bottle.

Drinks do not come with ice. If you ask for ice, you'll likely only get a few cubes.

Water is free in France if you ask for un carafe d'eau (uhn kah-rahf doh). You can also order (and pay for) **still or sparkling water**. Ask for de l'eau plate (duh loh

plaht - still) or de l'eau gazeuse (duh loh gah zuhzz - sparkling).

Time Constraints

Be aware of local dining customs. In Europe, eating is a social event and a 30-minute lunch is unheard of. Don't expect your waiter to come by every five minutes to see if you are done. This would be considered extremely rude. If you want something, chances are you'll have to flag him down. He isn't being lazy or bad at his job; he's giving you privacy to enjoy your meal in peace. This is great if you want to spend three hours people watching at a sidewalk cafe but can be frustrating when you are pressed for time.

If you don't have much time to eat, consider ordering from the "take away" counter (order your food à emporter – ah om-portay). In fact, many restaurants and cafes near busy tourist sites offer the same menu to go. Just pick up your lunch and take it to a nearby park. This is a great option when the weather is nice. Don't forget to grab a few napkins!



[Jump to index](#)

La Formule

In Paris you'll find many restaurants that offer meals at a set price for a specific number of courses. This is known as a "menu formule". The choices will be limited, but it often consists of selections from the restaurant's normal menu. A three-course meal would include an appetizer (une entrée), the main course (un plat), and a dessert (un dessert). Four courses often include soup (une soupe) at the beginning or cheese (du fromage) at the end of your meal. If the regular menu looks daunting, the formule is an easy-to-order alternative.

Tipping

Reward your waiter for good service. Unlike in the United States, French waiters must be paid at least the minimum wage, so a service charge is usually already included in the bill. A tip is appreciated but not always expected and tipping customs vary by situation. If you stop for drinks, it is customary to leave the change, especially if the service was good. For example, if your bill is 3.50, you can leave .50 on the change tray. However, this is not required. If you are paying with a credit card, there probably won't be a line on the receipt to leave a tip, so just leave

some change on the table. For dinner, a tip of 5-10% is sufficient for all but the fanciest restaurants.

Interacting with Parisians

French people in general, and Parisians in particular, have a reputation for being snobby and rude. Most of this can be attributed to the average tourist's lack of understanding of cultural differences and



inability to read his surroundings. With some knowledge of French culture and a little bit of common sense, you should be able to avoid any unpleasant encounters.

Paris is a busy city. Over 10 million people live in Paris and the surrounding suburbs and many more commute into the capital for work. Paris is also the number-one tourist destination in the world. This means that people who are in a hurry to get to work are constantly dealing with

tourists who don't know where they're going. **If you need help and decide to stop someone on the street, try to find someone who doesn't look busy.** In my experience, the elderly are often thrilled to help out.

French people don't smile at strangers. If they accidentally make eye contact on the street, they simply look away. This is not meant to be rude, it is just a part of the culture. As a matter of fact, many French people don't understand the American custom of greeting total strangers. Why ask how someone is doing if you don't care about the answer? This misunderstanding has led to the French stereotype that Americans are fake or insincere.

Always say bonjour when you walk into a store, even if there is no one right at the door. It is considered extremely rude not to do so. Many an unknowing tourist has left a store perplexed at the coldness of the cashier.

Learning a few words in French goes a long, long way. The pressure of interacting with a language barrier tends to make people forget their manners.

No one expects tourists to be fluent in a language before they travel, but non-English speakers tend to be very appreciative when tourists, especially English speakers, take the trouble to learn a few words. It really doesn't take much and it's the polite thing to do. Put yourself in their shoes and you can easily understand why. You probably wouldn't want to be constantly bombarded at work by people who are demanding service in a language you don't speak. I can almost guarantee that you will receive friendlier service when people can see that you are making an effort. At the very least, learn how to say hello, please and thank you and you will find a lot of people willing to help you struggle through the rest of the conversation.

Key French Phrases

Hello – bonjour (bohn-joor)

Goodbye – au revoir (ohr-vwah)

Please – s'il vous plaît (see voo play)

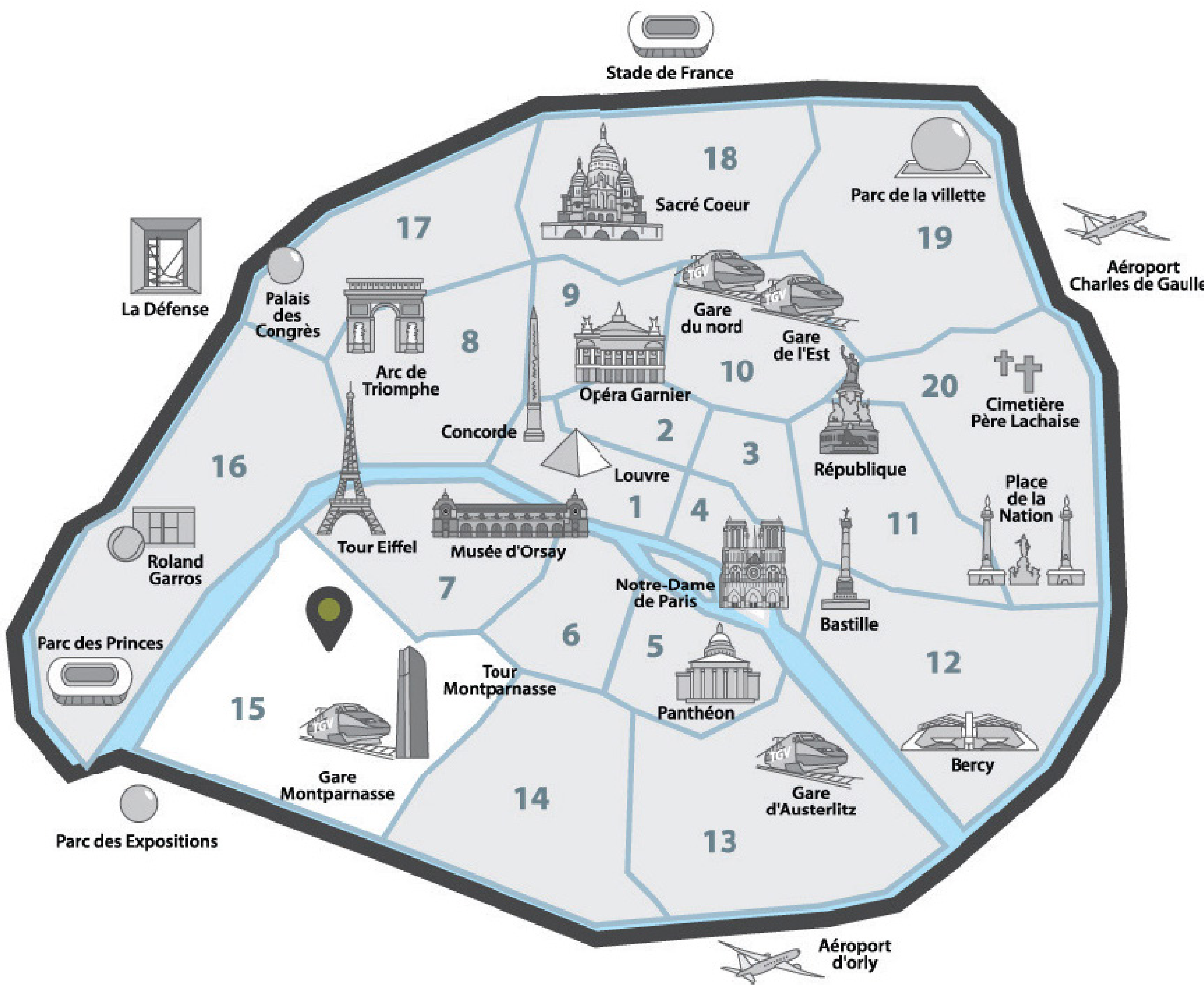
Thank you – merci (mehr-see)

Where is... – Où est... (oo eh)

How much is this? – C'est combien?
(say coh-m-byin)

I would like... – Je voudrais...
(juh voo-dray)

Paris Major Monuments



The Metro



[Jump to index](#)

Essential Paris Sights

Museums

Musée du Louvre: The world's largest and one of the best collections of art and artifacts. The museum houses the Mona Lisa, Venus de Milo, Winged Victory, as well as works by Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Vermeer, Delacroix and many other notables. Hours: Wed-Mon 9:00-18:00. Open until 21:45 on Wednesday and Friday. Closed Tuesday. Métro: Palais Royal-Musée du Louvre.

Musée d'Orsay: This former train station houses a large collection of Impressionist works. Hours: Tues-Sun 9:30-18:00. Open until 21:45 on Thursday. Closed Monday. Métro: Solférino, Assemblée Nationale, Musée d'Orsay.

Musée Rodin: Visit this 18th-century mansion to find sculptures by Rodin and other post-Renaissance artists. The gardens contain The Thinker and The Gates of Hell, as well a tea salon and pond. Hours: Tues-Sun 10:00-17:45. Closed Monday. Métro: Varenne, Invalides.

Musée Picasso: The world's largest collection of Picasso's works. Hours: Tues-Sun 9:30-18:00. Closed Monday. Métro: St. Paul or Chemin Vert.

Musée de Cluny: Medieval art and tapestries. Hours: Wed-Mon 9:15-17:45. Closed Tuesday. Métro: Cluny-La Sorbonne, St. Michel, or Odéon.

Centre Pompidou: This museum is just as famous for its interesting "hamster cage" exterior as its interior modern art collection. Don't miss the colorful Stravinsky Fountain and street performers outside. Hours: Daily 11:00-22:00. Métro: Rambuteau, Hôtel de Ville.

Musée de l'Orangerie: This museum was once a greenhouse for the Tuileries Palace and now contains an impressive collection of Impressionist works and panels of Monet's famous water lilies. Hours: Wed-Mon 9:00-18:00. Closed Tuesday. Métro: Concorde.

Monuments

Arc de Triomphe: Built by Napoleon to commemorate his victories in battle, this is the second-most recognizable symbol

of the city. Hours: April-September daily 10:00-23:00, October-March daily 10:00-22:30. Métro: Charles De Gaulle-Étoile.

Tour Eiffel: Gustave Eiffel's grand tower to celebrate the 1889 World's Fair remains an amazing architectural feat. Hours: June-September daily 9:00-midnight, October-May daily 9:30-23:00. Métro: Bir Hakeim, Trocadéro RER: Champs deMars.

Churches

Notre Dame: Located on the le-de-la-Cité in the middle of the Seine River. Hours: Church open daily 8:00-18:45. Open until 19:15 on Saturday and Sunday. Métro: Cité RER: St-Michel. Free Bell tower is open daily April-September 10:00-18:30, October-March 10:00-17:30. Treasury is open daily 09:30-17:30.

Sainte Chapelle: Not as renowned as Notre Dame, but every bit as impressive with breathtaking stained-glass windows. Hours: April-October daily 9:30-18:00, November-March daily 9:00-17:00. Closed Mon-Fri 13:00-14:15. Open until 21:30 on Wednesday May-September. Métro: Cité RER: St-Michel.

Sacré Coeur: This white cathedral is the jewel of Paris' highest elevation and a vantage point for a grand skyline view of the city. Hours: Daily 6:00-22:30. Métro: Anvers or Abbesses, then take the funicular or the steps to the top of the hill. Free Dome is open daily May-September 8:30-20:00, October-April 9:00-17:00.

Other

Napoleon's Tomb and Hôtel des Invalides: Site of Paris' war museum and the tomb of emperor Napoleon. Hours: April-October 10:00-18:00, November-March 10:00-17:00. Museum closed the first Monday of the month October-June. Open until 21:00 Tuesday in the summer. Métro: Invalides and La Tour Maubourg.

Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation: Monument to French Holocaust victims, located near Notre Dame. Hours: Tues-Sun April-September 10:00-19:00, October-March 10:00-17:00. Closed Monday. Métro: Cité, St-Paul or Maubert Mutualité.

Opéra Garnier: 19th-century opera house and setting for the musical The Phantom

of the Opera. Hours: Daily 10:00-17:00, except during performances. Métro: Opéra, Auber.

Tour Montparnasse: Spectacular views of Paris from the 56th floor. Hours: Daily April-September 9:30-23:30, October-March 9:30-22:30. Métro: Montparnasse-Bienvenue.

Panthéon: Originally built as a church, this building serves as the resting place for many famous French people, including Voltaire, Victor Hugo and Marie Curie. Hours: Daily 10:00-18:00. Métro: Cardinal Lemoine, Luxembourg.

Jardin du Luxembourg: The gardens and palace were created by Marie de Medici in the 17th century. Hours: Closes between 16:30 and 21:30, depending on the season. Métro: Luxembourg. Free

Les Catacombes: The bones from overcrowded 18th-century cemeteries are on display in these underground tunnels. Hours: Tues-Sun 10:00-20:30. Closed Monday. Métro: Denfert-Rochereau.

Cimetière du Père Lachaise: This cemetery, with the varied funerary styles

of 70,000 graves, is the resting place of Balzac, Chopin, Molière, Jim Morrison, Edith Piaf and Oscar Wilde. Hours: Daily November-March 9:00-17:30, April-October 9:00-18:00. Métro: Philippe Auguste, Père Lachaise. Free

Cimetière Montparnasse: This is the second-largest cemetery in Paris, on the site of three former farms. Baudelaire, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir are buried here. Hours: Daily November-March 9:00-17:30, April-October 9:00-18:00. Métro: Raspail, Gaîté. Free

Shopping

Chanel, Dior, Louis Vuitton, Hermès: Paris is the fashion capital of the world. Paris' Fashion Week is the grand finale of the big four. From souvenir shops on every corner to chic shopping streets, vintage boutiques and traditional markets, there's something for everyone.

Haute Couture

Avenue des Champs-Élysées – Arguably the most famous street in the world. Dotted with cafés, cinemas and shopping, it's a people-watcher's dream, but you won't find many locals here. The avenue begins with the Arc de Triomphe and

terminates into the Place de la Concorde and Tuileries Garden. Many of the shops stay open until midnight. Métro: Charles De Gaulle-Étoile, Georges V and Franklin D Roosevelt.

Rue de la Paix – Here you'll find many luxury stores, including jewelers like Cartier, Van Cleef & Arpels and Mellerio. It stretches from the Opéra Garnier to Place Vendôme. Métro: Opéra.

Rue Saint Honoré – From small boutiques to big fashion houses, this street runs parallel to the Louvre and gardens one block away. Métro: Palais RoyaleMusée du Louvre, Tuileries, Concorde.

Markets

Rue Cler – The most famous market street in Paris, where the locals go for daily shopping. Here you can find specialty food shops: bread, pastries, meat, cheese, fish and chocolate. Many of the stores are closed on Monday, but open Sunday morning. Located east of the Eiffel Tower's Champ de Mars. Métro: École Militaire.

Rue Mouffetard – Another good market street lined with stalls of delicious food. Many of the stores are closed on Monday, but open Sunday morning. Some do not reopen after lunch during the week. Located east of the Luxembourg Gardens. Métro: Censier-Daubenton.

Other Places of Interest

Galleries Lafayette – This department store is known for its elaborate, giant Christmas trees displayed under a breathtaking glass dome. Located just behind the Opéra Garnier. Métro: Chaussée d'Antin-La Fayette.

Bouquinistes along the Seine – The green boxes along the Seine near Notre Dame are actually used-book shops, but they offer other souvenirs as well. Vendors open the “store” and spread out their goods on the sidewalk, then pack it all back into the box at the end of the day. Métro: Saint-Michel-Notre Dame.

Montmartre – Montmartre has long been known as an artists’ hangout. In the square near Sacré Coeur you can find plenty of artwork for sale and many an artist willing to sketch you. Métro: Anvers, Abbesses, then take the funicular or the steps.



Museums

Musée du Louvre

The Louvre is the world's largest museum, with nearly 800,000 square feet of gallery space. It is the second-most visited museum in Europe. See David's 2-Hour Guide to the Best Art for an in-depth look at the Louvre.

Musée d'Orsay

The collection resides in an old train station along the banks of the Seine in the heart of Paris. With an airy and open feel, it possesses none of the stuffiness of the Louvre. In fact the Louvre refused to display the artwork which is now in the Orsay because it was too modern and risqué. The Orsay contains the works of French artists from the mid-19th century up to World War I (1848–1914). However, the impressionists are the stars of the show and continue to draw crowds. Artists such as

Manet, Renoir and Monet took Paris by surprise in the late 19th century by painting scenes of real people doing real things, all veiled in a fog-like haze. In their paintings they attempt to capture a moment in time, an impression, of everyday life. You can also see the antique furniture on display in the rooms of the hotel that was connected to the train station, now also part of the museum.

Musée de Cluny

The Cluny Museum is the national medieval museum. It is located on the site of the old Roman baths and displays artwork from the Middle Ages. Here you'll find stained glass, wood carvings and jewelry. In that time period, tapestries were used as teaching tools for the uneducated masses, and you'll find many on display here.

Musée de l'Orangerie

In 1922, Monet gifted France a number of his masterpiece Water Lilies paintings. They are on display here. Some of the canvases stretch over 13 feet. Other 20th-century artists on display here include: Renoir, Cézanne, Matisse and Picasso.

Monuments

Tour Eiffel (Eiffel Tower)

Although the Eiffel Tower has been around for fewer years than any other monument in Paris, it has become one of the world's most recognized symbols. Nearly 7 million people visit the tower each year. It can be crowded, time consuming and expensive, but no visit to Paris would be complete without a trip up the tower.

At the height of the Industrial Revolution, bridge builder Gustav Eiffel won a contest to build a tower for the 1889 World Exposition in Paris to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution. It took Mr. Eiffel and his crew just 26 months to erect the tower on the grass of the Champ de Mars. Upon completion it was met with mixed emotions. To some, the tower was a great feat of engineering and technology, but to others, Eiffel's tower was a huge ugly scar on the face of beautiful Paris. The French writer Guy de Maupassant hated the tower so much that he supposedly ate his lunch in the tower's restaurant for years. He said it was the only place in Paris

where he couldn't see it!

It was supposed to be a temporary structure, only meant to stand for 20 years. But it became a permanent fixture when a radio antenna was placed at the top. During WWI, signals were sent from the top of the tower, directing troops on the front line.

Today it is regarded by all as an enduring symbol of the City of Light. My favorite way to experience the tower is to picnic on the Champ de Mars (the park at the foot of the tower). Afterwards I head up the tower about an hour before dark and watch the sunset and the city light up.

Tower Tidbits:

- The tower weighs 7,000 tons, but through its unique construction the weight it exerts on the ground is actually less than that of a person sitting in a chair.
- It is 1,051 feet tall.
- The tower covers 2.5 acres of land.
- It requires 50 tons of paint. And is painted every 7 years.
- 2.5 million rivets were used in its construction.



[Jump to index](#)

The Sights

Observation decks are placed on three levels at 200, 400 and 900 feet. Your ticket price goes up the higher you climb. Purchase your ticket at the booth under Pilier Nord or Pilier Est (North or East pillar). If you are going all the way to the top, you'll board a dual-level sliding elevator and ride up through the metal beams to the second level. Here you get off, join the long line to wait for another, smaller elevator to take you to the top. This elevator holds about 50 people and is usually jammed packed. You'll go up, up and away, seemingly forever. Once you reach the upper level, you'll step into a small area enclosed in glass. Don't stop here, find the door and continue outside for fantastic views. It is crowded, but worth it!

Some choose not to go all the way to the top. The first level has exhibits, a post office (the cancellation stamp will read Tour Eiffel), a snack bar, toilets and shops. There are also exhibits and a movie about the history of the tower. The snack bar has a great view with outdoor tables in the summer.

Arc de Triomphe

The grand arc was commissioned by

[Jump to index](#)

Napoleon in 1806 to commemorate his victory at the Battle of Austerlitz. However, with failing military battles and the architect's death, the monument had barely gotten off the ground by 1811 or so. It was finally completed during the reign of Louis Philippe in 1836. This iconic monument has been the site of many major events in Parisian history, such as the funeral of Napoleon, the arrival of the Nazis and the triumphant return of Charles De Gaulle and the Allied forces at the end of World War II. This is indeed a hallowed place for the French. On November 11, 1920, the "Unknown Soldier" was laid to rest under an eternal flame as a symbol of remembrance for all who have fought and died for their country. Take a look around the outside at all the sculpture and ornamentation. This monument is massive...167 feet high (1/2 the length of a football field) and 145 feet wide. The names of 128 battles and 558 generals cover the oversized exterior, and there are countless little scenes depicted on the façade. However, all pale in comparison to the huge masterpiece known as La Marseillaise, Lady Liberty and the departure of volunteers going to fight the invading Prussians in 1792.

The Arc de Triomphe sits on the Place Charles de Gaulle with 12 perfectly radiating avenues terminating at its center. The entire complex is known as L'Étoile, the star. To get the best view, climb the 284 steps to the observation deck. Here you'll be treated to a panoramic view of the skyline and a bird's-eye view of the tangled traffic below.

Churches

Notre Dame

Paris' Cathedral of Our Lady (Notre Dame in French) has dominated the banks of the Seine for over 750 years. Located on the Île-de-la-Cité, this cathedral took over one hundred years to complete and was made famous in Victor Hugo's novel about the misshapen Quasimodo. It is a textbook example of Gothic architectural style. Decorated with stained glass, ornate statuary, flying buttresses, pointy spires and finely-detailed carvings, it is no wonder that for many this is considered France's most famous church. To do the cathedral justice, you'll need a couple of hours to visit the interior and wander about the outside.

Sainte Chapelle

Don't miss this beautiful chapel, tucked away in the confines of the Palais du Justice. Loaded with over 6,000 square feet of magnificent stained glass, it is the epitome of the high gothic style. Constructed in the 13th century, its graceful curved arches stretching to heaven support richly-colored stained glass panes depicting more than 1,100 scenes from the Bible, including the Passion of Christ. It was originally built to hold holy relics, in particular the crown of thorns.

Saint Germain des Prés

There has been a church on this site since 452AD. The church you see here is all that is left of a huge monastery established in 1163. Often we tend to think of churches as gray and drab, but step inside and notice the colorful interior. Originally all churches were painted in this fashion. But time has caused the paint in most to fade and flake away, leaving the dull grey we've come to associate with "old" churches.

Other Sights

Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation

This memorial commemorates the 200,000 French victims sent to Nazi concentration camps. The memorial was inaugurated on April 12, 1962, by General de Gaulle (president of France) as a place of contemplation and remembrance of the suffering caused by the deportation. Situated below ground, you'll enter a long hallway studded with 200,000 lights that leads to an eternal flame.

Opéra Garnier

The lavishly decorated structure opened in 1875 and is the work of Charles Garnier. Until 1990, it was France's foremost opera house. Garnier dreamed of creating a grand and new architectural style, but it never caught on. The place only seats about 2,000 people, not nearly large enough to hold all the opera buffs of Paris. Consequentially, only the elite could afford the outrageous prices to see a performance. But the opera house is really lavishly decorated. The great staircase, foyer and auditorium are all worth a look. The auditorium's ceiling is a masterpiece done by Marc Chagall in 1964 and it surrounds an enormous eight ton chandelier. Finally the entire structure is built atop an underground lake with its foundations reaching far below. The

Opéra Garnier later became famous for this lavish décor and subterranean lake as it is featured prominently in the novel (and musical) The Phantom of the Opera.

Panthéon

The Panthéon sits atop Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, the historic hill of the Latin Quarter. Louis XV commissioned the church in honor of Sainte Geneviève in gratitude to God for having recovered his health after an illness. During the French Revolution, it was turned into a mausoleum for Frenchmen who had sacrificed their lives for their country or achieved something great. Its role has alternated between the two, and today many well-known French figures are entombed here: Victor Hugo, Marie Curie, Alexandre Dumas, Voltaire, Rousseau and Louis Braille, just to name a few. From April to October, tourists can enjoy the fine views of the capital from the colonnade of the dome.

Les Catacombes

In 1785 the Revolutionary Government of Paris decided to clear out many of the graveyards in Paris to improve sanitary conditions



[Jump to index](#)

and make room for others to be buried. It was decided that the bones from the church cemeteries would be deposited just outside the city in the limestone quarries which contained miles of tunnels. The parish priest would bless the remains and lead carts filled with bones to the quarries. The bones were then stacked in neat piles about five feet high and reaching over 80 feet deep behind neat walls of skulls. Upon completion, the pile would be labeled with a plaque noting the date, church and district from which the bones originated. It is estimated that these tunnels contain the bones of approximately six million people.

The “tour” begins with a sixty-foot descent on a spiral staircase. Then you follow a one-way path approximately one mile in length, passing pile after pile of bones. Bring a flashlight and don’t take anything. As creepy and unsanitary as it sounds, many visitors attempt to smuggle out bones, but an attendant will check your bags at the end. Be aware that you’ll emerge from the Catacombs in a different location.

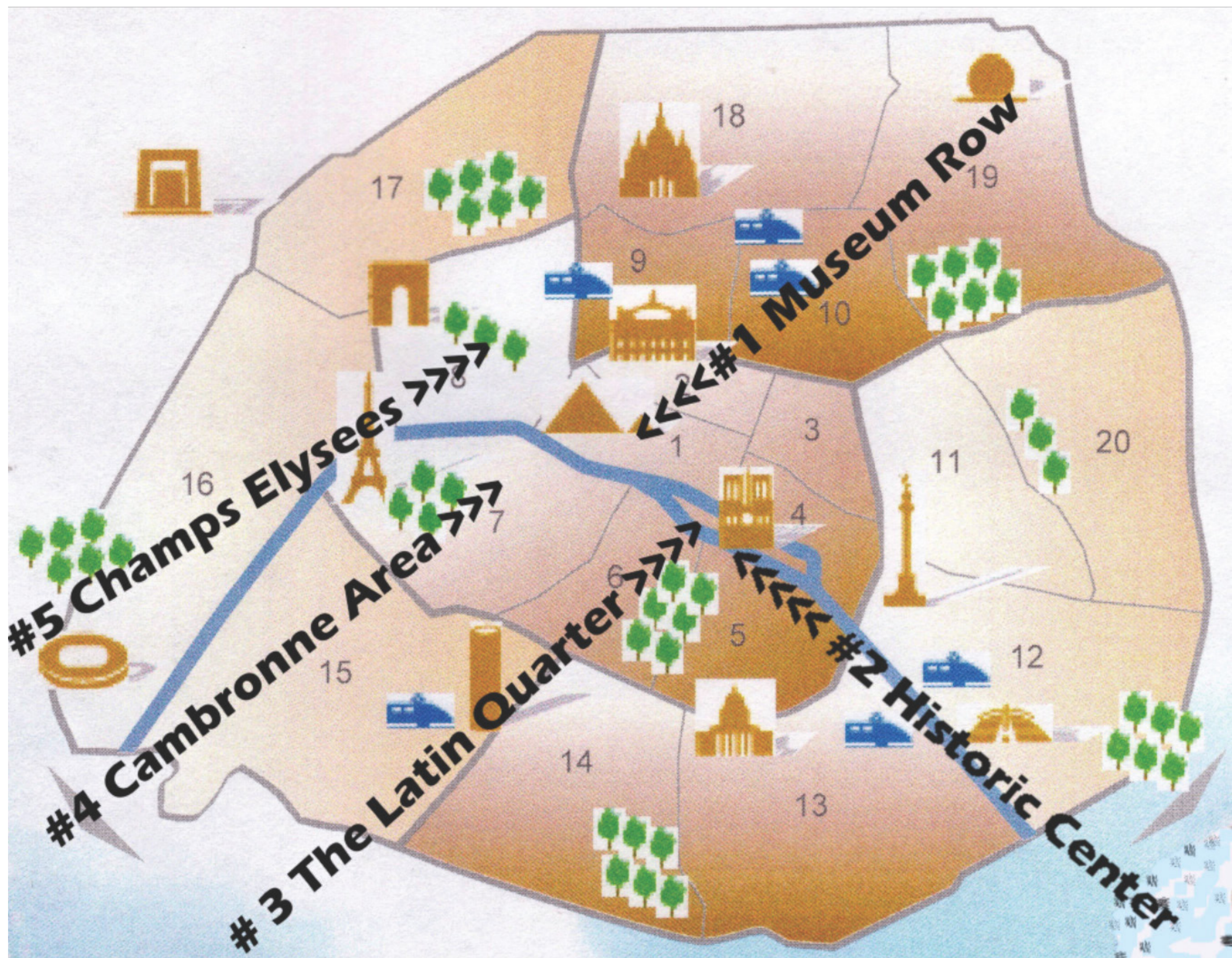
Luxembourg Gardens (Jardin du Luxembourg)

[Jump to index](#)

The first time I visited Paris my school band gave a Sunday afternoon concert at this park. Hundreds of local Parisians came to sing, dance and enjoy our music. It was truly a most memorable experience. In the summer there is usually a concert here every weekend. During the rest of the week you'll find people sitting in the free chairs, enjoying the sun, taking a nap or watching as their children play. The park and the palace were built for Marie de Medici in 1612. The gardens, covering 25 hectares of land, are styled after the Boboli Gardens in Florence. There is also an orchard, an apiary (for bee-keeping), greenhouses with a collection of orchids, the Medici fountain, a large pond and a rose garden. There are 106 statues on the grounds, including a replica of the Statue of Liberty. This park was once a hangout for a young, poor Ernest Hemmingway. It is said he would come here to catch pigeons, strangle them bare-handed and have them for dinner. Don't worry, there are plenty of cafés just around the corner.

Paris by Neighborhood

Most people try to pack too much into a tour to Paris. Take my word for it...there is too much to do. If you try to do all the museums, the Eiffel Tower, a cruise, the Champs Élysées, and Notre Dame in one visit you'll totally miss out on the Paris experience. Slow down, watch the Parisians, follow their lead, do just a little sightseeing each day leaving time to sit in a café or a city park and enjoy life. This is the true European spirit! I'll concentrate on several neighborhoods of Paris which I consider essential for visitors, with suggestions of what to visit, and more importantly, what to experience while you are in this magnificent capital city.



Museum Row

The Louvre, Tuileries and Environs

The **Jardin des Tuileries** is one of Paris' biggest public parks filled with fountains, shady walks, cafés, lounge chairs, children playing, and the sound of people enjoying life. When the Louvre served as the royal palace, these grounds were private property. Using the Tuileries as a landmark, you can visit the museums of the Louvre, L'Orangerie, Orsay, and Jeu de Paume all within just a short walking distance.

The **Musée du Louvre** is located at the eastern end of the gardens. At the western end of the gardens, just before the Place de la Concorde, is the **Musée de l'Orangerie** (p.20) to the left and the **Jeu de Paume** to the right. The Jeu de Paume was the last space dedicated to this indoor precursor of tennis and now serves as a modern art exhibition space. Head toward the Seine and you'll see the **Musée D'Orsay** across the river. You can take the footbridge **Passerelle Léopold Sédar Senghor**, built by Napoleon III and renamed in 2006 in honor of the Senegalese writer. If you would rather stay on the rive droite (the right bank), you can

check out the touristy shops and cafes along the **Rue de Rivoli**. **Angelina** has the best hot chocolate in Paris, maybe in the world. One block behind this road is the **Rue Saint Honoré**, known for its fashion stores and boutiques. Along this street you will also see the **Comédie Française**, the world's longest established national theater, created after the death of the famous playwright Molière in the 17th century. **Place Vendôme**, with its bronze (green) column, sits just off the street as well. The square was commissioned by Louis XIV to showcase his power. Later, Napoleon replaced the statue of the king with the column seen today, made from 1,200 enemy canons. Just beyond Place Vendôme is **Rue de la Paix**, another high-end shopping street.

Historic City Center

Notre Dame and the Île de la cite Gallic fishermen set up camp here along the banks of the River Seine over 2,000 years ago and thus Paris was born. Since that time, many have chosen to make this exclusive neighborhood their home.



[Jump to index](#)

You can take the metro to Cité and come out right on the island if you're pressed for time, but taking a walk along the Seine is a must while in Paris. From the Louvre, head east towards the island in the middle of the Seine (at the very least, take the metro to Pont Neuf, so you can cross the bridge). You will pass the **Pont des Arts**, a small pedestrian bridge with great views of the island. This is where the "love locks" tradition began. Lovers put their initials on locks, attach them to public fixtures like bridges and throw away the key to symbolize their unbreakable love. That is, until part of the railing of this bridge fell into the water under the weight. In 2015, the government removed 45 tons of locks from the bridge. Across the Pont des Arts, you can see the **Institut de France**, a beautiful domed building which houses five academies dedicated to art and science. This is the birthplace of the **Académie Française**, a group of forty elderly people who decide on changes to the French language, or as high school French students like to call them, the French Grammar Police. They are known as les Immortels, because they are elected for life. Continue along the Seine and you will come to the **Pont Neuf**. Although its name means "new bridge",

it is the oldest bridge in Paris (but it was new when it got its name). As you reach the island, you will come to the **Statue of Henri IV** who finished the construction of the bridge. At the time, Parisians used the “bronze king” as a gathering place. It was melted down during the French Revolution (because of a need for bronze and a hatred for symbols of the monarchy), but replaced with a replica in 1818. The **little park** behind the statue is a great place for a picnic. Head into the island along the north bank and turn onto **Boulevard du Palais**. The building on the corner is the **Conciergerie**. This medieval palace was converted to a tribunal and served as a prison during the Revolution. This is where Marie Antoinette was held before execution. Parts of the palace remain, including the kitchens. Just beyond that is the **Palais de Justice** and **Sainte Chapelle**. The church is a bit difficult to access because it is tucked away on the courthouse grounds, but it is well worth it if you like stained-glass.



[Jump to index](#)

There are over 1,000 stunning windows and the Gothic architecture is beautiful. It was originally built to hold holy relics. Head down **Rue de Lutèce** in the center of the island and you'll come to the Cité metro stop on **Place Louis Léprieux**, a stunning example of the Art Nouveau architectural style that took Paris by storm in the early 19th century. Notice the gently sweeping lines, characteristic green color scheme, and nifty red light globes. Nearby is a **flower market** and a garden center. Head south on **Rue de la Cité**. Continue crossing the island and you will come to its crown jewel: **la Cathédrale de Notre Dame**. There may be a long line in the courtyard, but it moves fairly quickly. While you're there, check out the **Statue of Charlemagne**. During his four-decade reign over most of Western Europe, he promoted education, scholarship and culture. After your visit, climb the bell tower or grab some food from a nearby café and relax in the **park** behind the church. The view of the flying buttresses in the back rivals the impressive façade. Beyond the park is the **Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation**. Cross the **Pont Saint Louis** and you'll be on another island: Île Saint Louis. This residential island is

known for its restaurants, shops and wonderful **Berthillon ice cream** (31 rue St. Louis-en-l'Île). Consider visiting the shops and exploring the island in the late morning or early afternoon. Be sure to scope out one of the many restaurants for dinner and make a reservation. Then later, come back for dinner followed by an ice cream and a stroll along the Seine.

The Latin Quarter and Luxembourg Gardens

The Left Bank

Just across the river from Notre Dame, this tourist chunk is easily added to a morning of visiting the historic city center.

Cross over from Notre Dame and follow the Seine west until you come to Rue Saint Jacques or Boulevard Saint Michel (or take the metro to Saint Michel, if you are just starting out). These streets run parallel about two blocks apart and there are many cross streets. The Latin Quarter was once the center of Roman-dominated Paris, but it wasn't until the Middle Ages that the area became a center of learning and education. At the time, instruction was given in Latin, the language of the intellectuals, hence the term "Latin Quarter".

This area took on a youthful, bohemian air because of the presence of university students. On Boulevard Saint Michel you'll see the **Saint Michel fountain**, with the archangel Michael vanquishing the devil. It was commissioned in the 19th century by Haussmann, who was responsible for renovating much of Paris (widening streets, constructing sewers and demolishing overcrowded medieval neighborhoods). Take a stroll down the narrow cobbled streets and you'll find countless **cafés** which were once filled with intellectuals studying at the university level. The essence of this bohemian intellectual atmosphere still lingers. At the cross street **Rue Saint Séverin**, you'll come upon a pedestrian section. Here the streets are littered with cafés and bistros delivering inexpensive ethnic meals which are a good value, but do nothing to enhance the ambiance of the Latin Quarter. On the corner of Rue Saint Séverin and Rue Saint Jacques is **Saint Séverin Church**. The bell tower dates back to the 13th century. Continuing away from the Seine, the **Musée de Cluny** is at the cross street Boulevard Saint Germain. Continue down either Boulevard Saint Michel or Rue

Saint Jacques. On Rue Saint Jacques you'll pass the **Université de la Sorbonne**. Dating back to the 13th century, it was one of the first universities in the world. At the cross street **Rue Soufflot**, to the right (west) is the **Luxembourg Gardens**, created by Marie de Medici, and to the left (east) is the **Panthéon**, a church that serves as a mausoleum for some of the most famous people in French history.

From here, you can head north through Saint Germain des Prés or south to Montparnasse.

North of the Luxembourg Gardens, down **Rue Servandoni** is the **Saint Sulpice Church**, featured in The Da Vinci Code. This old baroque church, hidden behind a lively outdoor market, is of little historical significance, but it really does contain the "rose line" mentioned in the novel. Head west and turn north (right) on **Rue Bonaparte**. At the cross street **Boulevard Saint Germain** there is the **Saint Germain des Prés Church** (p.23), where a church has stood since 452 AD. In the evening this area is a lively place, full of street entertainers, artists and many cafés.

South of the Luxembourg Gardens is the Montparnasse neighborhood. Exit the Luxembourg Gardens on the south. You can either continue in the long park (**Jardin des Grands Explorateurs**) across the street or head to the eastern edge of the gardens and continue south down **Boulevard Saint Michel**. Either way, you'll eventually run into the cross street Boulevard de Port-Royal. Turn right (west) to reach Montparnasse Tower or continue on **Avenue Denfert Rochereau** to reach the **Catacombs. Montparnasse Tower** (La Tour Montparnasse) is a 59-story skyscraper that can be seen from much of Paris. Many consider it an eyesore, but for tourists it provides another vantage point from which to see the city panorama. And the bonus: you're standing on the ugliest building in the city, so it's a beautiful view! From the top you'll see the **Montparnasse Cemetery** (Cimetière du Montparnasse) next door. Take **Boulevard Edgar Quinet** to visit the cemetery, the second largest in France covering almost 47 acres. Many famous French people are buried here, including the poet Charles Baudelaire, the playwright Samuel Beckett, the

singer Serge Gainsbourg, the industrialist André Citroën and the writers Guy de Maupassant, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. Exit to the south on **Rue Froidevaux** and head left (east) to **Place Denfert Rochereau**. Here you'll see the entrance to the **Catacombes** by the metro station. There really is nothing quite like the Catacombs, over a mile of underground pathways lined with human bones. If you take the tour, you'll come out in a different location, on **Rue Rémy Dumoncel**. Turn right (west) and continue until you reach **Avenue Général Leclerc**. Turn right to reach the metro Mouton-Duvernét or continue back to Place Denfert Rochereau to follow this itinerary in reverse to visit the cemetery and the tower.

Tour Eiffel and Invalides

Eiffel Tower, École Militaire, Champ de Mars, Hôtel des Invalides

This area has everything you need: grand parks, plenty of bistros and cafés, good-value hotels, grocery stores, a convenient Métro station, department stores and the Eiffel Tower just around the corner.

Paris by Neighborhood

Start at Trocadéro metro stop. Trocadéro is just across the river from the Eiffel Tower and the elevated vantage point provides the best views. When you reach street level, button-hook back to the left around the corner and you'll be treated to the **Tour Eiffel** dominating the sky line. Framed by fountains, classical buildings and the river, it is a most awesome sight. No doubt you've seen countless snapshots taken from this vantage point, but having your own taken here is a must. Nowadays the Trocadéro is flooded with vendors of worthless crap: Eiffel Tower key chains, umbrellas, dancing Mickey Mouses, watches and jewelry, often sold illegally. If you must buy some of the stuff, at least barter for it! From the upper level of the Trocadéro, it is a 10-minute walk down the steps, across the river and to the Eiffel Tower.



[Jump to index](#)

On the Eiffel Tower side of the river, you can catch a **river cruise**, with operators on both sides of the bridge. Once you've marveled at Gustave Eiffel's iron masterpiece, continue to the **Champ de Mars**, the long grassy park beyond the Eiffel Tower. This is my favorite picnic spot in all of Paris. By day it is dusty and crowded and well-patrolled by the police who forbid anyone to sit on the grass. But come late afternoon, the rules relax. Gradually people wander into the park, claim a spot on the grassy green and spread out their picnics. By twilight the park is dotted with pods of people enjoying their dinner, the ambiance and the massive Tour Eiffel dominating the western sky. To see the tower gradually become illuminated while the sun sets in the distant sky is one of the special European experiences I look forward to year after year. At night, the tower also sparkles every hour on the hour for five minutes. At the far end of the Champ de Mars is the **Wall for Peace** (le mur pour la paix), built in the spirit of the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. Made of stainless steel and glass, the word peace is engraved in 32 languages. This side of the park is framed by the École **Militaire**, which was built by Louis XV and still serves as a training

school for French army officers. It is only open to the public on European Heritage Days, the third week in September. With the park at your back, head left (northeast) on **Place Joffre**. At the corner turn right (east) onto **Avenue de Tourville** (left at the fork) to reach the **Hôtel des Invalides**, built by Louis XIV for his wounded soldiers. Today the complex houses three military museums, including the **Musée de l'Armée** with an impressive collection of weaponry, armor and history spanning 800 years. The church with the golden dome, a dominating landmark in the Paris skyline, once served as the royal chapel and now holds **Napoleon's Tomb**. If you walk to the Seine through the park in front of the building, you'll come to the **Pont Alexandre III**, one of the most emblematic bridges in Paris with its golden adornments. Across the Seine is the equally-impressive Grand Palais and Petit Palais.

The Champs-Élysées and Beyond

Champs-Élysées, Arc De Triomphe and Opéra Neighborhood

No visit to Paris is complete without a stroll down this avenue of the rich and

famous. True, the **Champs Élysées** is crowded, overpriced and nowadays frequented more by tourists than locals, but the essence of France seems to be distilled here, just like the perfume in the nearby boutiques. You can begin your stroll at either end. I like to connect the Louvre, Tuileries, Place de la Concorde, and Arc du Triomphe into a leisurely stroll after a morning of visiting the Louvre. The main thing is to walk it! Métro stops are conveniently located every few blocks along the Champs-Élysées. Take a look at a city map and select your starting point. Go to the Charles de Gaulle Étoile metro stop if you want to start at the **Arc de Triomphe**, Napoleon's monument to his military triumphs. The avenue stretches for several blocks, lined with cafes, movie theaters and shops. The boutiques are quintessentially French, but there are plenty of exported American staples too. When the shops end, you'll reach the **park** section of the



[Jump to index](#)

avenue. You'll see two round theaters, **Théâtre du Rond-Point** on the right and **Théâtre Marigny** on the left. Behind the theater on the left is **Palais de l'Élysée**, the residence of the French president. But don't bother to try and visit. It is closed to the public except for European Heritage Days, the third week in September. Also on the right is the **Grand Palais**, topped by an impressive glass dome, and the **Petit Palais** next door. These buildings showcase art exhibits and temporary collections. In front of the Grand Palais is a **Statue of Général De Gaulle**, the leader of the Free French forces during WWII and later President of France. There is a **Statue of Clemenceau** in front of the Petit Palais. Clemenceau was the prime minister of France during WWI. There is also a **Statue of Winston Churchill** at the other end of the Petit Palais. The Champs-Élysées ends at the **Place de la Concorde**. Today it is known for the **Luxor Obelisk**, a 3,300 year-old Egyptian relic; and its two beautiful fountains, **Fontaine des Mers** and **Fontaine des Fleuves**. But its history isn't as rosy. This was one of the main

execution sites during the French Revolution. Both Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were guillotined here. If you look out towards the Seine, you can see the **Assemblée Nationale**, the seat of the French Parliament. In the other direction, looking up **Rue Royale**, you can see **Madeleine Church**. Finished in 1842, its style is more reminiscent of a Greek temple than a church. Napoleon intended it to be a pantheon in honor of his armies. Today the church offers service and classical music concerts. From the church, follow **Boulevard de la Madeleine** east (facing the church, it's on your right) and you will come to the **Opéra Garnier**, the setting of The Phantom of the Opera. If you're in the mood to do some shopping, the **Galleries Lafayette** is just behind the opera house and Rue de la Paix with its high-end shops is in front, just off of the **Place de l'Opéra**. Rue de la Paix passes through **Place Vendôme**, with its bronze column made of 1,200 enemy cannons, and then



[Jump to index](#)

runs into the cross street **Rue Saint Honoré**, another shopping street. If you keep going straight, you'll be back in the **Tuileries Garden**.

A Final Word of Advice

Don't get so involved in seeing the sights that you miss out on experiencing Paris. Make time each day to find a café or park in which to sit and relax. Slowing down allows you to become a temporary local and experience some of the ambiance and charm of this huge city. Simply sitting down and ordering one coffee or drink entitles you to the table for as long as you want it! There is a café on almost every corner. So, if you're tired of walking ... have a seat and enjoy life!



This guide has been prepared for you by:
[David McGuffin's Exploring Europe](#)

[Jump to index](#)