

Travis and Esmée's

Paris Travel guide



Paris Travel guide

Paris is an incredibly unique, chic city with incredible diversity – it is filled with breath-taking architecture, beautiful parks, historical sites and endless dining choices from elegant dining and multicultural restaurants to the very classic Parisian cafés. We had the opportunity to live in this iconic city for nearly six months and still felt as if we were still unable to capture all of its beauty in its entirety. That being said, this city delivers endless opportunities to create your own Parisian travelers' story. Below We've listed a number of options to choose from to help guide you through crafting your personal experience in this unforgettable city. Most of these suggestions come from our personal experiences in Paris; We hope they help plan a trip custom to your own personal interest. Also, we encourage everyone to get lost in this city, it has a lot to offer and you're bound to stumble upon many hidden gems.

With love,

Travis + Esmée

Traveling

Paris's infrastructure is incredibly convenient providing multiple avenues to travel easily through each arrondissement.

Walking – Paris is such a beautiful city with amazing Renaissance architecture that when possible, we'd always recommend walking if you don't mind the exercise – otherwise the following options are also great, starting with the metro.

Metro – It is highly efficient and there are literally stations 100's of meters within one another. Each ticket costs 1.80 euro, however, we suggest buying metro a carnet which is a packet of 10 tickets at one time. This can be done either at the 'ticket offices' located in many of the metro stations but can easily be done at the kiosk (all kiosk have an English option). Download one of the metro apps, we used 'Paris by Metro' which allows you to search metro stations and map out the appropriate transfers to get from one station to the next without using wifi or data. There are a number of apps that deliver this same functionality – all are extremely useful. RATP app – which is the official transportation company running the metro, buses, and trains – will give you the option to map out traveling on all three travel mediums.

Uber – We used Uber often when living there; it works extremely well, especially late at night when the metro is closed. This was back in 2015, unsure if France has implemented any restrictions on Uber since then but typically used Uber when the metro was closed late at night.

Bus – The bus system is fairly easy to understand. Use the RATP app to map out how to get from one location to another using a number of buses. Buses will not get you to your location as fast as Metro but is an alternative for those who are patient and unwilling to spend a ton of money for a cab or Uber when the metro is closed. The metro tickets are interchangeable and work for buses.

Bike – Another very cheap and convenient means of traveling around Paris, especially for a short trip, is the Velib' bike rental system. This is a very fun way to see the Parisian sites and feel a bit more immersed into the Parisian culture (Learn more on <http://blog.velib.paris.fr/en/2013/12/13/velib-how-it-works-and-how-much-it-costs/>). You can subscribe to 7 days for a small fee. Although from what I remember you can slip your card in the machine and the first 30 min are free, each additional 30 min is 1 euro. If you want to be a true Parisian, you bike <30 min and return it to a station (they are all around the city) and trade in for another bike avoiding that 1 euro charge for another 30 min.

Parks & Gardens

Paris has amazing parks and gardens all around the city for enjoyable walks, site seeing, and picnics. We'd often grab some wine and baguettes and relax at a park on a beautiful day. Alert – this comment will trend throughout this document but, below are our favorite parks and gardens – however, we encourage doing research as there are so many to visit.

Jardin du Luxembourg – One of the most well-known and beautiful gardens in Paris. Be sure to find the Medici fountain which some people have a tendency to miss.

Parc de Buttes-Chaumont – This is one of my personal favorite parks. Great sites – a beautiful walk and a really cool gazebo with an incredible view of the city (there's a hole in the fence where you can sneak up to the gazebo). Also perfect place for a picnic.

Jardin des Plantes – This a beautiful botanical garden with glasshouses and a maze. Perfect for place for a stroll in a park.

Jardin des Tuileries – Very large and elegant garden with a great view of the Arc de Triomphe. I really enjoyed this garden as it was designed by the same architect who designed the garden at Versailles.

Sites

Paris has vast number of unforgettable sites. Below are just our personal must see sites – however, we encourage doing research as there are so many to visit.

Eiffel Tower – I think this one speaks for itself. Be sure to order a ticket online to avoid lines to get to the top. However, in low tourist season lines aren't too awful – so a spontaneous trip is doable. If you're looking for a workout, it's free to walk up to the middle. Going to the top is a must! Also, I'd avoid dining there, it's incredibly expensive and not the best food (but it's Paris, so still pretty damn good.)

Sacre Coeur – This is an iconic church in the Montemarte, it's a beautiful structure but more importantly located at Paris's highest point. Going up to the top of this church is a must for an absolutely breath-taking view on a clear day. Entrance to visit the top is a bit hidden on the side of the church – ask if you're unable to find it.

Pace du Tertre – This is the classic painters square located right next to the Sacre Coeur. Loved this place – great spot to tourist shop, grab a coffee at a cute café, and get your hands on some authentic French paintings.

Sainte Chapelle – Located right next to the Notre Dame, it is my favorite church in Paris. Very small with the most unreal stained glass set up I've ever seen. Try to go on a day the sun is shining.

Le Catacombs – So amazing Travis went twice. Incredible French history to learn about here so I highly recommend you purchase the audio tour as it really makes for the best experience when walking through this mysterious tour of underground tunnels filled with skeletons.

Le Pompidou – Aside from the Louvre, this is my favorite Museum. Very modern, unique structure with a ton of interesting modern art. Also a favorite of mine because I really enjoy Jeff Koon's work; the top is purely dedicated to his art work but cost additional to the museum itself.

Sites

Musée du Louvre – The most well known museum in Paris and also one of the largest in the world. This museum hosts a ton of iconic artifacts such as the Mona Lisa. It has a beautiful garden and is filled with art that will take you multiple days to walk through and truly marvel at the iconic and historical pieces that lay inside.

Arc de Triomphe – One of the most iconic monuments in Paris is the Arc de Triomphe which honors those who fought and died for France in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, with the names of all French victories and generals inscribed on its inner and outer surfaces. This is a truly momentous monument that is a must see and I highly recommend going to the top! The view is incredible.

Notre Dame - The cathedral is widely considered to be one of the finest examples of French Gothic architecture, and it is among the largest and most well-known church buildings in the world. The naturalism of its sculptures and stained glass serve to contrast it with earlier Romanesque architecture.

Musée du O'rsay - It is housed in the former Gare d'Orsay, a Beaux-Arts railway station built between 1898 and 1900. It is one of the largest art museums in Europe.

Les Halles – Central fresh food market in the heart of Paris with an awesome and unique shopping experience.

Shakespeare & Company (Book Store) – this could have also been in the shopping section but if you enjoy a good book and want to wander around a really cute and unique and famous book store this is a great place to stop by after or before visiting the Notre Dame or Saint Chappelle as it is really close.

Areas To walk around

There is nothing like getting lost in Paris. This romantic city, full of ancient historical buildings and breath taking architecture makes for the perfect areas to just wonder and marvel at its beauty. Paris is broken up in the 20 districts and parts of these districts make up sections such as the Montmartre, which represent specific historical moments in time. Take some time to get lost in Paris's beauty, and discover gems you may not have found while walking around with a purpose.

The Latin Quarter - Known for its student life, lively atmosphere and bistros, the Latin Quarter is the home to a number of higher education establishments in a compact area full of tiny streets with some delicious bistros and restaurants.

Le Marais - Le Marais is a historic district in Paris and Esmée's favorite area. Long the aristocratic district of Paris, it hosts many outstanding buildings of historic and architectural importance. Here you will find many art museums including Musée Picasso.

Île de la Cité - One of two remaining natural islands in the Seine within the city of Paris. It is the center of Paris and the location where the medieval city was re-founded. This is where the lock bridge used to be before it was replaced, as well as iconic monuments that were the start of the building of Paris, including Notre Dame.

Saint-Germain-des-Prés - This quarter is known for several of its famous cafés - Les Deux Magots, Café de Flore, le Procope, and the Brasserie Lipp as well as a large number of bookstores including the famous Shakespeare and Company bookstore.

Montmartre - This area is known as the artistic area, and the few places where there is many hills and provide breath taking views of Paris, and it's very chic feel. This section is home to the highest point in Paris, the Sacre Coeur and the famous painters square.

Shopping

I think it's safe to say that Paris is the fashion capital of the world. Although other cities such as New York, Milan and London are centers of fashion, many fashion houses are founded in Paris and the most famous fashion pioneers are from this beautiful city. The legacy of high-end fashion design is evident in the hundreds of shops which line in the streets of Paris. Here are some of our favorite shopping areas, department stores and shops.

Shopping areas and streets

Le Marais – often referred to as 'Old Paris', Le Marais exudes old-world charm and modern-day functionality in the city's core. This area was well kept by its once thriving Jewish population (hence why you can find the best falafel here!) and its recent incarnation as an LGBTQ hotspot which keeps the neighborhood lively, but is also perfect for shopping, with its many unique boutiques and fashion concepts. Highlights in this area are the streets Rue de Rivoli for the mainstream French brands and stores and Rue Etienne-Marcel for the more unique concepts. Marais also has a huge offer of beautiful vintage stores, where you can find amazing pre-owned haute couture items that will still last you a life time.

Avenue Montaigne – The most fancy and high end street in Paris. With just about every designer label available on one street, it's worth a visit – even when your budget doesn't allow for a big splurge.

Champs-Élysées – For glory and grandeur, this is the most famous avenue in the world, as the Champs-Élysées draws a perfectly straight line from Musée du Louvre. This street is very touristy and therefore not one of my favorite places to shop, but definitely great for sight-seeing. You will find enormous hub-stores and famous brands on this street.

Shopping

Department stores

Galleries Lafayette - One of the biggest retail and fashion leaders in Paris has become an icon since its creation in 1894. You will find all your high end designers under the same roof with a wide range of several ready-to-wear and haute-couture collections. The price range will go from moderate to luxury.

Printemps - Meaning 'Spring' (season) in French, Printemps delivers the latest fashion to a modern and young community. Men's, Women's and beauty departments are divided over several gorgeous buildings, all on Grand Boulevards.

Le BHV - This department store collects less well-known brands and unique fashion concepts. The price range is also more affordable than Lafayette and Printemps.

Le Bon Marché - With a very fashion forward state of mind, Le Bon Marché has a very unique style that's not suitable for just everyone. The collections at this store are like works of art and are definitely worth checking out.

Dining

In our opinion, Paris is generally the San Francisco or New York of the European culinary scene. It delivers unique and diverse location to eat food from all over the world, not just French cuisine. Definitely google all of the restaurants below to get a better idea of what they provide. Below are just our personal favorites – however, we encourage doing research as there are so many to visit.

Ciel de Paris – Instead of spending loads of money dining on the Eiffel Tower where you will be unable to bask in the towers beauty, why not pick a very elegant and chic dining spot that provides a beautiful view of Paris and the Eiffel Tower? This restaurant is pricey, but very good and offers an incredible experience. Fine dining with a 4/5 course meal...I don't quite remember. This restaurant is at the top of the Montparnasse – one of the tallest buildings in Paris. Reservation required.

L'etage de Pastavino – Our favorite Italian restaurant. It's a hidden gem located at the top of a pasta market. It's very small cute, quaint Italian restaurant with fair prices. Generally 25-30 euros a plate. Reservation required.

Caffé Vito – In our opinion, the best pizza in Paris.

Bien Bien – Travis is a big Thai food fan, so this was his go to spot for Thai.

Le 404 – A very cool, unique Moroccan food spot. Loved the food here and the ambiance. Reservation required.

Kong – This restaurant has insane character with great Asian/French fusion food. It's a bit pricey but the experience and food definitely deliver. The décor is insane and the view is amazing. Reservation required.

Le Challet Savoyard – This restaurant delivers a very unique fondue experience. They bring out your preferred half-wheel of cheese with a heating lamp. The lamp melts the cheese and you are given tools to scrap it off. Really fun experience with delicious food. Reservation recommended.

Dining

Refuge de Fondue – Located in the beautiful Montmartre area, this restaurant is all about the experience. We recommend ordering an order of cheese fondue and beef; the best of both worlds to share. The food is okay but the experience will make up for it. It's an icon spot in the Montmartre where they serve you wine in baby bottles. Reservation recommended.

Le Procope – Known as the oldest café and restaurant in Paris, also known to start the whole café scene – this is a must dinner experience to get a great sense of the old French cuisine experience.

Le Grand Véfour – If you're looking for fine dining experience at a 2 Michelin star restaurant this is an incredible place to dine. It has beautiful décor and the food is fantastic. Definitely come to the restaurant with an empty stomach. On that note – this is a very expensive restaurant, around 300 Euros per person at a minimum. There are over 100 Michelin star restaurants in this city from 1 star to 3 but I'd highly recommend treating yourself at least one night, typically 1 star Michelin star restaurants can start at around 100 Euros per person which isn't too bad.

The Peninsula Hotel (Sunday Brunch) – this is an absolutely gorgeous hotel (if you want to go big, book a room here but it's not cheap). Very fine dining and a beautiful restaurant as well as rooftop bar but for the best bang for your buck, I'd recommend the Sunday brunch. It's 120 Euros per person but a totally incredible experience – the people are lovely, the food is awesome and it's a buffet style. Highly recommended.

Bastille Gourmande – Hands down, the best CRÊPE in Paris! Savory is my favorite (Chicken, egg, and cheese!) but also bomb sweet crêpes. A small street side crepe shop just down from the Vans store in the Bastille. I highly recommend going here. I'd always go out of my way to get my crêpe from here.

We hope this guide helps with your amazing travels in Paris – we highly recommend to do a lot of research as this guide hardly scrapes the surface of what this city has to offer. These are just some of our favorite spots, so we hope you enjoy!



Bon Voyage!