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# INTRODUCTION

**Last year, while taking our children on their first foray into Africa we visited Marrakesh in Morocco. On our first evening we walked into the Djemaa el-Fna (page 16), the city's world famous open square. It was like walking into another world. The smoke and smells from food stalls, the sound of drummers and the clamour of people shouting, singing and hawking their wares. Everyone's eyes were out on stalks, senses in overdrive. I had been worried it would be too much, but the kids asked to go again the following night. One of the most memorable moments I've had travelling cost nothing beyond the gumption to walk into the square that night.**

The monetary value implied in the term *free* can misrepresent what's on offer within these pages. The quality of an experience, after all, is not attached to a price tag. Many of the suggestions here involve unearthing the world's secret wonders, whether that's swimming around Sydney's ocean pools (page 267) or strolling the tombs and monuments of Delhi's Lodi Gardens (page 37). Walkers tackling the great tracks of New Zealand (page 260) will find themselves close to the soul of those beautiful islands.

For many of us, when we take our first steps travelling free things are not only appealing but essential if we're to make our backpacking days last as long as possible. And it's not just formative forays - many unforgettable blasts of freedom and discovery tend to be budget affairs. You quickly realise that

cheap can mean much, much better. No Roman dinner will ever match the bread and cheese picnic in Villa Celimontana, a short walk from the Colosseum, on my first visit to the Eternal City. And if we're talking life lessons, there are few better insights into the human condition than sharing a dorm room with a dozen others from around the world.

Nations all around the world recognise the value of making the wonders under their stewardship accessible. 5000 years of Chinese history? Free (National Museum of China, page 28). 19 museums and galleries in Washington DC? Free (Smithsonian Institution, page 242). Britain's national parks? All free. Donations always welcome, of course. And if you want to experience all those popular places at their best then get up early and get there before the crowds arrive. The priceless calm of early mornings doesn't come with a price tag either, by the way.

It's an exaggeration to say that everything good is free, so you'll find plenty of excellent value cheap things to experience throughout this book. Dip into your spare change for classy street food like a *choripán* (chorizo sandwich) in Buenos Aires (page 277), the best views of Hong Kong's skyline from the Star Ferry (page 48) and a Boston brewery tour (page 179). Great memories, a happier you and a grateful wallet; one glance through these pages and you may never aspire to the indulgences of top-end travel again.

Tom Hall



**AFRICA**



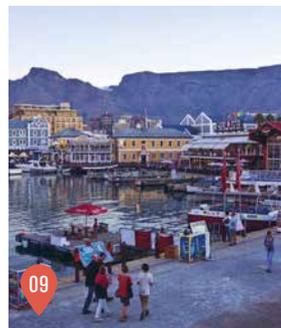
03



07



06



09

sheltered **False Bay's Muizenberg** (5e) and **St James** (5f) are family friendly, with water warmed by Indian Ocean currents. All are free, except Simons Town's **Boulders Beach** (5g; 8am-6.30pm, longer in Dec-Jan; R60) with its 3000 endangered African penguins.

#### 06 Bo-Kaap

On the side of Signal Hill, Bo-Kaap, the former Malay Quarter, is famous for its streetscapes, mosques and cuisine-based tourism. Wander freely around the streets, visit the cheap **Bo-Kaap Museum** (6a; [bokaap.co.za/museum](http://bokaap.co.za/museum); 71 Wale St; 10am-5pm Mon-Sat; R20) or do a **cooking course/tour** ([bokaapcookingtour.co.za](http://bokaapcookingtour.co.za); R700, including dinner). Nearby is **Long St** (6b), home of the city's underground entertainment scene, alongside second-hand bookshops and boho boutiques.

#### 07 Howl at the lion

**Table Mountain National Park** (7a) has hundreds of trails, wending around the Twelve Apostles, Devil's Peak, Signal Hill and Table Mountain. Most are free-access, but there are four pay points. Various routes scale the vertical kilometre to Devil's Peak, but if you're here during a full moon, join locals trekking with beers to **Lion's Head** (7b) to watch moonrise over the Hottentots Holland Mountains.

#### 08 Sea Point promenade

Loved by everyone from runners and skaters to hand-holding couples and kids, this 11km-long, wave-splattered, careless and car-free coastal stretch is full of playgrounds and amazing outdoor artwork. You can swim for free in the wild Atlantic, or seek sanctuary in one of the world's finest public pools, the open-air **Sea Point Pavilion** ([www.capetown.gov.za](http://www.capetown.gov.za); 7am-7pm summer, 9am-5pm winter;

## IZIKO MUSEUMS

The Iziko Museums of South Africa ([iziko.org.za](http://iziko.org.za)) is an 11-strong collection of Cape Town's top museums and attractions, including the **Bo-Kaap Museum**, the **South African National Gallery** (*Government Ave, Company's Garden; 10am-5pm*), **South African Museum and Planetarium** (*25 Queen Victoria St; 10am-5pm*), **Maritime Centre** (*Union-Castle House, Dock Rd, V&A Waterfront; 10am-5pm*) and **Groot Constantia Manor House** (*Groot Constantia Estate; 10am-5pm*), the oldest wine-producing estate in the country. These museums typically charge about R30, but for eight or nine days each year, typically public holidays, they all throw their doors open for free. Check the [website](http://www.iziko.org.za) for up-to-date details.



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R21) with diving boards, splash puddles and two Olympic-size lap pools.

#### 09 Victoria & Alfred Waterfront

A former wharf transformed into a swanky waterfront entertainment, eating and shopping arena, the V&A offers everything from free wi-fi to meetings with freedom fighters Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu – albeit in bronze form. Selfie-snappers shouldn't pose too long next to the seals, though – they're the real deal. Street performers provide entertainment, and free events take place year-round. *Robben Island tours depart here.* [waterfront.co.za](http://waterfront.co.za); 9am-9pm; free.

#### 10 Going downtown

Visiting a Township is an essential Cape Town experience; combine it with a budget feed at **Mzoli's** (10a; *Gugulethu; 9am-6pm; meals R50-100*). Buy meat at this Gugs butcher and get it cooked on a traditional *braai* (barbecue), while supping beer and bouncing to Kwaito beats. Excellent tours ([laurastownshiptours.co.za](http://laurastownshiptours.co.za); R400) can be done, and shack accommodation is available at **Vicky's**

**B&B** (10b; *Khayelitsha Township*), complete with Xhosa-style home cooking.

#### 11 Wine tasting

South Africa produces some of the planet's best palate-pleasing plonk and it would be criminal not to try a few drops. Lucky then, that **Wine Concepts** (11a; [wineconcepts.co.za](http://wineconcepts.co.za); 50 Kloof St) offers complimentary wine tasting six days a week (*4-7pm Mon-Fri, noon-3pm Sat*). **Tjing Tjing Rooftop Bar** (11b; [tjingtjing.co.za](http://tjingtjing.co.za); 165 Longmarket St) also offers free wine tasting from 5pm to 7pm on Wednesdays.

#### 12 Cape Town Carnival

Born on Long St amid the orgy of euphoria and energy that surrounded SA's hosting of the 2010 Football World Cup, this carnival has since grown into a massive annual gathering to celebrate South Africa's diversity. Some 50,000 people watch and participate in festivities that engulf Green Point, with floats, music, dancing and after-partying. [capetowncarnival.com](http://capetowncarnival.com); *Fanwalk, Green Point; Mar; free.*

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# PARIS

Paris is one of the world's great free cities. For the price of a drink, you can spend hours on a cafe terrace watching the eternal theatre of the place unfold. If you're able to drag yourself away, there are countless other free sights in this Paris of priceless glamour.



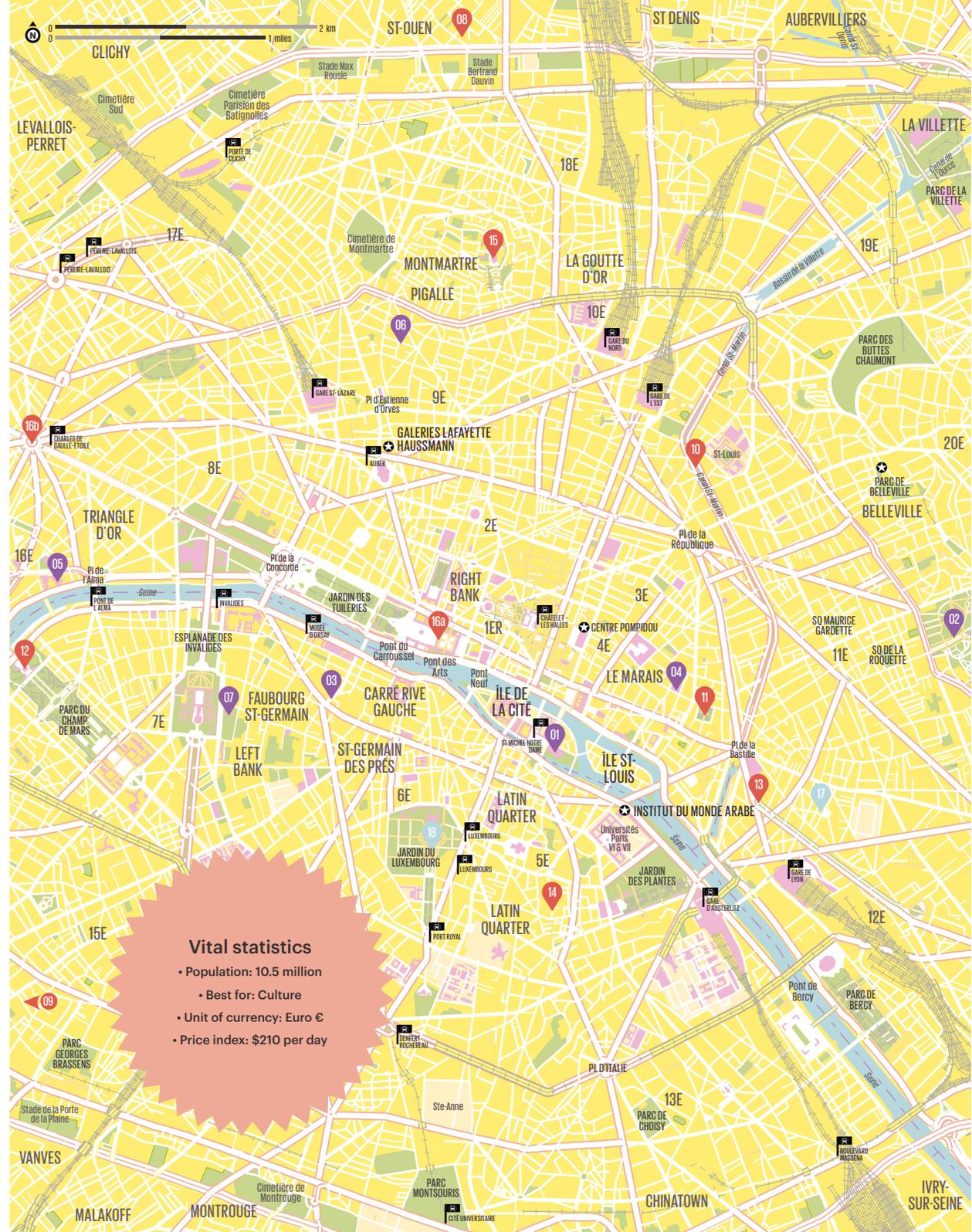
## 01 Cathédrale Notre Dame de Paris

Believe it or not, entry to this masterpiece of French Gothic architecture, one of the world's best-known churches, is free. First, make a circumnavigation of the exterior with its famed flying buttresses; inside, be wowed by the spectacular rose windows. If you want to get nose-to-nose with the gargoyles, there's a fee to climb the tower. [www.cathedraledeparis.com](http://www.cathedraledeparis.com); 6 place du Parvis Notre Dame, 4e; 8am-6.45pm Mon-Fri, 8am-7.15pm Sat + Sun; free.

## 02 Cimetière du Père Lachaise

This hillside cemetery is known for celebrity graves, with Jim Morrison's, Oscar Wilde's and Édith Piaf's most visited. There are many others – writers Molière, Proust and Colette and countless revolutionaries and politicians. It's a sculpture garden, historic monument and one of Paris' major sights. [www.pere-lachaise.com](http://www.pere-lachaise.com); 16 rue du Repos & blvd de Ménilmontant, 20e; 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-6pm Sat, 9am-6pm Sun; free.

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### Vital statistics

- Population: 10.5 million
- Best for: Culture
- Unit of currency: Euro €
- Price index: \$210 per day

**03 Deyrolle**

This taxidermy shop dating from 1831 is a veritable museum of natural history. See animals exotic and familiar, great and small, incredibly lifelike and artistically posed (all from zoos, circuses or farms, naturally deceased). And all for sale. If you can't fit a recumbent tiger into your luggage (or budget), pick up a beautifully illustrated vintage poster or a gorgeous arrangement of exotic bugs. [www.deyrolle.com](http://www.deyrolle.com); 46 rue du Bac, 6e; 10am-1pm & 2-7pm Mon, 10am-7pm Tue-Sat; admission free.

**04 Musée Carnavalet**

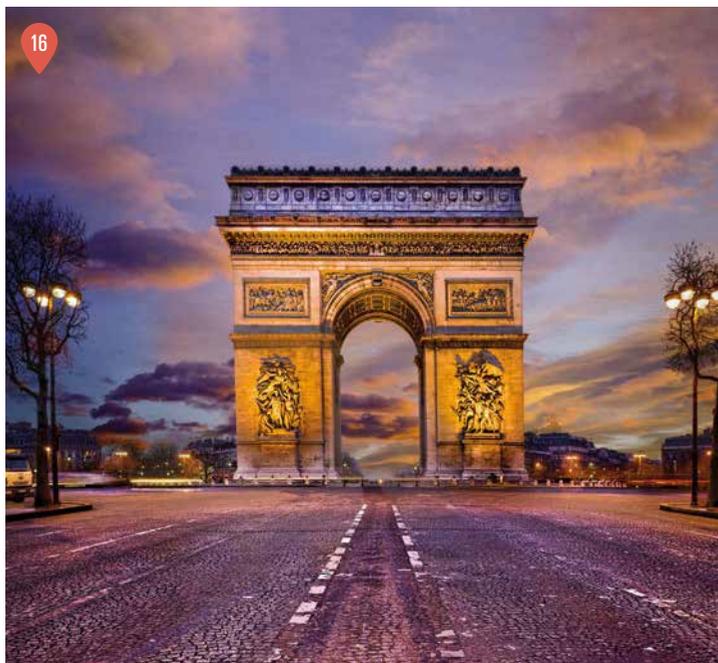
One of the best reasons to visit this museum of Parisian history is its gorgeous setting in two 16th-century *hôtels particuliers*, lavish townhouses built by noblemen of Le Marais. Among its fascinating artefacts and artworks highlights are the painstakingly reconstructed *fin-de-siècle* drawing rooms and baroque interiors, vivid glimpses into how the other half lived in the Paris of the past. [carnavalet.paris.fr](http://carnavalet.paris.fr); 23 rue de Sévigné, 3e; 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; free.

**05 Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris**

The beauty of Paris' lesser-known museums: incredible art without the queues. This is among the best, with an outstanding permanent collection of 20th-century artworks, and art-deco furniture and objects. Standouts are Raoul Dufy's *La Fée Électricité* – a room-sized mural depicting the discovery of electricity – Matisse's *La Danse* and a collection of Robert Delaunay's masterpieces. [mam.paris.fr](http://mam.paris.fr); 11 av du Président Wilson, 16e; 10am-6pm Tue-Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-10pm Thu; free.



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16

**FANTASTIC FREE VIEWS**

Looking out over the City of Lights as night falls: priceless. Montmartre may be a top spot, but it is crowded and you'll get more peaceful vistas from the top of Parc de Belleville. The view along the Seine from the terrace of the Institut du Monde Arabe ([www.imarabe.org](http://www.imarabe.org); 1 place Mohammed V, 5e; 10am-6pm Tue-Thu, 10am-9.30pm Fri, 10am-7pm Sat + Sun) is one of the best of Notre Dame, and costs only a cup of coffee. The top-floor terrace at Galeries Lafayette ([haussmann.galerieslafayette.com](http://haussmann.galerieslafayette.com); 40 blvd Haussmann, 9e; 9.30am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-9pm Thu) looks out over Opéra Garnier and the Grands Blvds. Free.

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**06 Musée de la Vie Romantique**

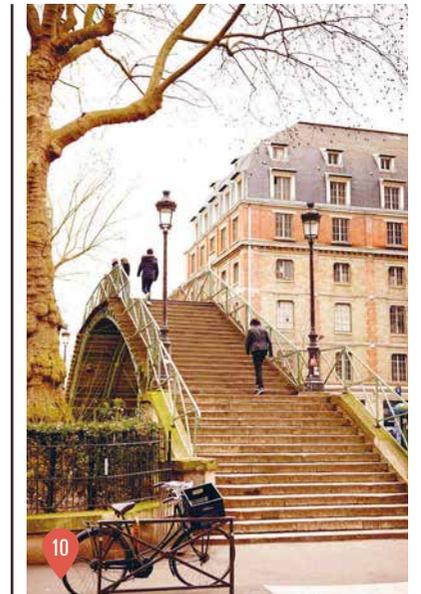
Walk through the paved courtyard of this 1830 *hôtel particulier* (grand townhouse) and into the artistic life of 19th-century Paris. Chopin, Delacroix, Ingres, Liszt and others frequented Ary Scheffer's Friday-night salons here. The museum features his works and the memorabilia of neighbour George Sand. The artist's workshops, garden and tearoom are beyond charming, then wander around the surrounding *quartier* of Nouvelle Athènes. [vie-romantique.paris.fr](http://vie-romantique.paris.fr); 16 rue Chaptal, 9e; 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; free.

**07 Musée Rodin's garden**

It's well worth the museum's admission price (€7) to see the collection of France's greatest modern sculptor. If strapped for cash, however, you can access just the gardens where some of his most celebrated sculptures – *The Thinker*, *The Burghers of Calais* and others – are dotted throughout the grounds of the 18th-century mansion where Rodin lived and worked. [musee-rodin.fr](http://musee-rodin.fr); 79 rue de Varenne, 7e; 10am-5.45pm Tue & Thu-Sun; €2.

**08 Browse at Marché Paul Bert**

The Marché aux Puces (flea market) de St-Ouen, a sprawling complex of interconnected markets, provides many free hours of entertainment. The standout Marché Paul Bert is more museum than shop (with prices to match). Fans of mid-century interior design will be in heaven, but antiques also abound – expect mounted zebra heads and lots of gilt. [marcheauxpuces-saintouen.com](http://marcheauxpuces-saintouen.com); 96 rue Paul Bert, Saint-Ouen; 9am-6pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun, 11am-5pm Mon; admission free.



10

**09 Château de Versailles' gardens**

While the château at Versailles is truly extraordinary, the crush of people inside can be hard to bear. But the landscaped gardens – meticulously manicured, dotted with elegant statuary and exuberant fountains, and criss-crossed with paths (bikes can be rented) – are divine and free for half the year. Pack a picnic and distance those madding crowds. [chateauversailles.fr](http://chateauversailles.fr); Versailles; 7am-8.30pm; free Nov-Mar, charge Tue, Sat & Sun Apr-Oct.

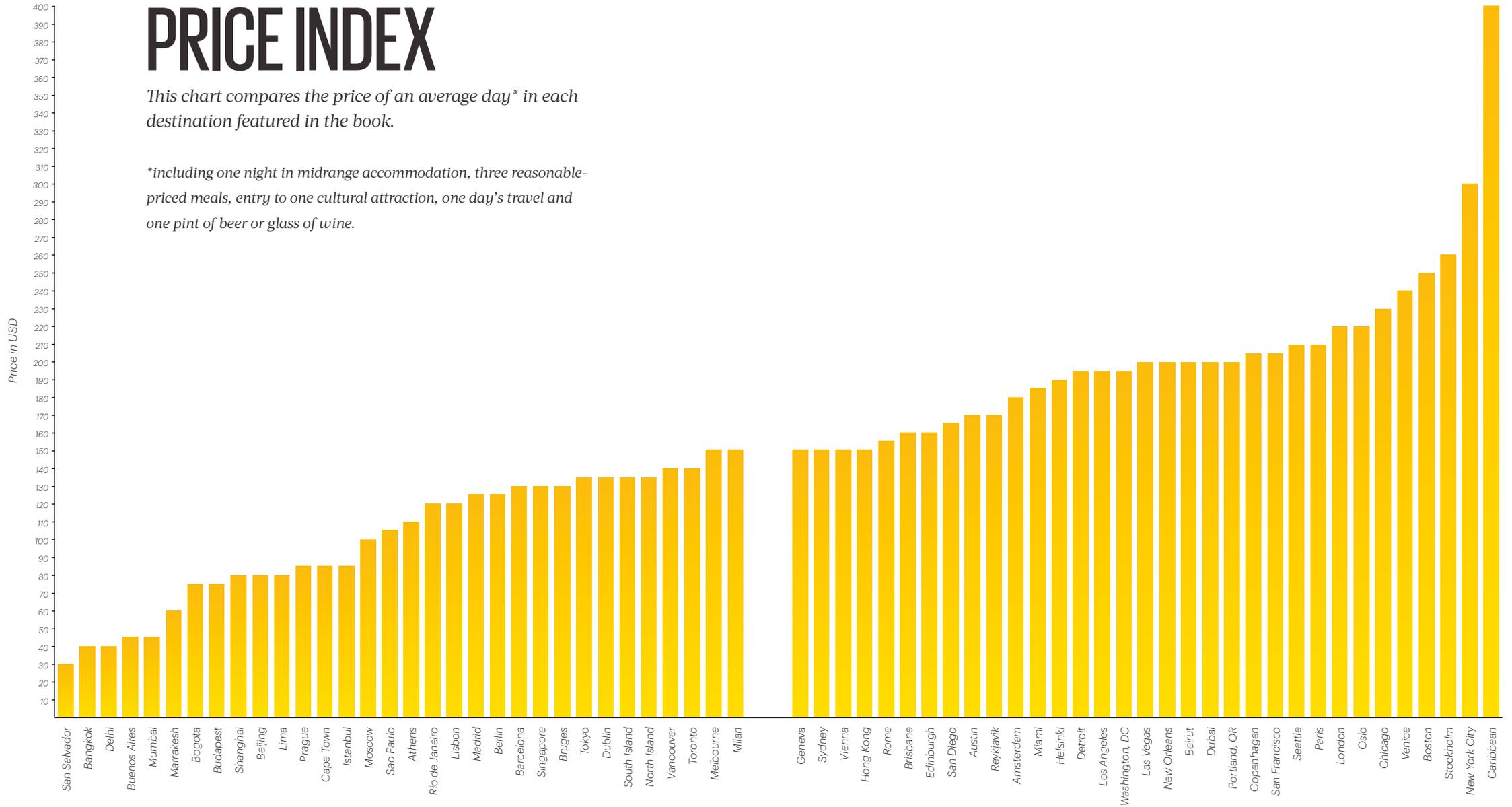
**10 Chill at Canal St-Martin**

You might recognise the iron footbridges and tree-lined quays from the film *Amélie*. From République to Gare du Nord, the canal is *bobobois* (bohemian-bourgeoisie) central – gentrified but a little scruffy, home to the latest hot new neo-bistro or be-seen cocktail bar. You'll find the locals on the banks enjoying an *apéro* or in full picnic mode with blankets,

# PRICE INDEX

This chart compares the price of an average day\* in each destination featured in the book.

\*including one night in midrange accommodation, three reasonable-priced meals, entry to one cultural attraction, one day's travel and one pint of beer or glass of wine.



PRICE INDEX

PRICE INDEX

# AUTHORS

A writer and San Lorenzo fan, **Isabel Albiston** spent four years drinking mate and Malbec in the Buenos Aires neighbourhood of Boedo.

**Kate Armstrong's** favourite travel moments include a tasty meal, stimulating sights and local company, many of which come (nearly) free.

Prague-based writer **Mark Baker** is the author of several Lonely Planet titles, including LP's *Prague* pocket guide and *The Best of Prague and the Czech Republic*.

Travel writer, author, editor and cheapskate **Sarah Baxter** loves nothing better than bagging bargains around the globe.

A true Californian (by choice if not by birth), **Andrew Bender** covers San Diego for Lonely Planet guidebooks.

**Joe Bindloss** is Lonely Planet's destination editor for the Indian Subcontinent and the author of more than 50 books for Lonely Planet.

**Sarah Bennett's** author credits

include Lonely Planet *New Zealand*, *Hiking New Zealand* and *The Best of Wellington*. [www.bennettandslater.co.nz](http://www.bennettandslater.co.nz)

A Californian, but not by birth, **Sara Benson** calls Oakland home. She escapes to Las Vegas more than she'll willingly admit.

**Piera Chen** is a travel writer, film reviewer and poet who is happy to call Hong Kong home most days.

**Janine Eberle** is a Francophile who spends as much time as possible in Paris, spending her entire budget on cheese and wine.

Based in Buenos Aires, **Bridget Gleeson** has travelled widely in South America, tasting a variety of wines along the way.

**Tom Hall** has been writing for Lonely Planet for most of his adult life and when not doing so composes love letters to Hagia Sophia in Istanbul.

**Anthony Ham** fell irretrievably in love with Madrid on his first visit and later lived there for a decade. He speaks fluent Spanish and returns regularly to a city he considers his spiritual home.

From Lido beaches to backstreet bacari, **Paula Hardy** has

contributed to Lonely Planet's Italian guides for over 15 years. Find her tweets @paula6hardy.

**Daniel McCrohan** is the creator of iPhone app Beijing on a Budget, author of 28 guidebooks, and a budget-travel expert who has been living in China for more than a decade.

**Virginia Jealous** is presently on the trail of poet Laurence Hope – aka Violet Nicolson – who died in India in 1904.

**Adam Karlin** has written multiple guidebooks for New Orleans and Miami, and loves spending time – and sometimes, money – in both cities.

After two decades of scraping, scrimping, haggling and hitching around the planet, **Patrick Kinsella** has experienced more by trying things than buying things.

**Mariella Krause** has been writing for Lonely Planet since 2006, and enjoying cheap margaritas in Austin since long before that.

Since 2002, **Alex Leviton** has contributed to roughly half a gabillion Lonely Planet titles, most recently about Italy, food, and happiness.

**Karyn Noble** is a senior editor in Lonely Planet's London office, and a freelance writer specialising in luxury and gourmet travel. But some of her most memorable experiences didn't cost a thing. She tweets @MsKarynNoble.

**Virginia Maxwell** is a long-time and regular visitor to the Middle East, covering destinations including Turkey, Iran and Lebanon for Lonely Planet.

**Rebecca Milner** is a Tokyo resident and co-author of Lonely Planet guides to Japan and Korea.

**Kate Morgan** is a freelance travel writer and editor, and has worked on several guidebooks and trade titles for Lonely Planet.

**Becky Ohlsen** is a freelance writer in Portland, Oregon, and is always happy to stumble across a good deal.

**Stephanie Ong** is an Australian editor/writer based in Milan. When not immersed in writing and travel, she's eating well and complaining about tax – like every good Italian.

**Matt Phillips** loves free things (who doesn't?), particularly those involving the great outdoors. Writes about Africa, Europe, Asia and his native Vancouver.

**Brendan Sainsbury** is a British writer based near Vancouver, Canada. He has been exploring and writing about Seattle for over a decade.

**Brandon Presser** is an award-winning travel writer and television personality who has visited over 100 countries and penned over 40 books for Lonely Planet.

**Kevin Raub** is a São Paulo-based travel journalist and a co-author of four Lonely Planet Brazil travel guides.

Travel writer **Sarah Reid** loves discovering a new side to Singapore during every visit – especially when it's free.

**Andrea Schulte-Peevers** lives in Berlin and has been the author of all nine editions of Lonely Planet's guide to the city.

**Lee Slater's** author credits include Lonely Planet *New Zealand*, *Hiking New Zealand* and *The Best of Wellington*. [www.bennettandslater.co.nz](http://www.bennettandslater.co.nz)

**Tom Spurling** is a writer and teacher based in Hong Kong. He has contributed to 11 Lonely Planet guidebooks, including *Central America on a Shoestring*.

**Phillip Tang** likes to show off the best-value thrills for many Lonely Planet publications, including *Peru* and *Discover Peru*. More at [philliptang.co.uk](http://philliptang.co.uk)

**Mara Vorhees** is a travel writer, city dweller and mother of twins. Follow her adventures at [www.havetwinswilltravel.com](http://www.havetwinswilltravel.com).

**Regis St. Louis** is a full-time travel writer and the author of Lonely Planet guides to New York City and Rio de Janeiro.

A contributor to numerous LP books on culture and travel, **Caroline Veldhuis** continues her lifelong mission to sample vegetarian food in situ around the world.

**Tasmin Waby** is a broke London-based writer and editor who travels at every opportunity (usually with her kids – but not always).

British writer **Nicola Williams** lives on the southern side of Lake Geneva. She writes Lonely Planet's Switzerland guide and tweets at @tripalong.

Based in Chicago for over 25 years, **Karla Zimmerman** knows where the bargains hide (especially when it comes to beer and donuts).

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