



Day Trips from Paris

Versailles p274

When it comes to over-the-top opulence, the colossal Château de Versailles (shut Monday) is in a class of its own, even for France.

Disneyland Resort Paris p280

The 'party never stops' at Europe's Disneyland theme park, Disney Village's hotels, shops, restaurants and clubs, and Walt Disney Studios Park, bringing film, animation and TV production to life.

Fontainebleau p281

A lavish château (shut Tuesday) and rambling forest grace the elegant town of Fontainebleau, and its international business school gives it a vibrant edge.

Chartres p284

Rising from fertile farmland, Chartres' Cathédrale Notre Dame, famed for its beautiful stained glass, dominates the charming medieval town of Chartres.

Giverny p287

Art and/or garden lovers shouldn't miss Giverny's Maison et Jardins de Claude Monet (closed from November to March), the former home and flower-filled gardens of the impressionist master.



TOP SIGHT VERSAILLES

Louis XIV transformed his father's hunting lodge into the monumental Château de Versailles in the mid-17th century, and it remains France's most famous, grandest palace. Situated 22km southwest of Paris, the baroque château was the kingdom's political capital and the seat of the royal court from 1682 until the French Revolution in 1789.

Intending the château to house his court of 6000 people, Louis XIV hired four talented men to take on the gargantuan task: architect Louis Le Vau; Jules Hardouin-Mansart, who took over from Le Vau in the mid-1670s; painter and interior designer Charles Le Brun; and landscape designer André Le Nôtre, under whom entire hills were flattened, marshes drained and forests moved to create the seemingly endless gardens, ponds and fountains for which Versailles is so well known. It has been on Unesco's World Heritage list since 1979.

Sprawling over 900 hectares, the estate is divided into four main sections: the 580m-long palace; the gardens, canals and pools to the west of the palace; two smaller palaces, the Grand Trianon and the Petit Trianon, to the northwest; and the Hameau de la Reine (Queen's Hamlet) north of the Petit Trianon.

Tickets include an English-language audioguide. For an offbeat insight, check out the independent app **Happy Versailles** (www.happy-visit-versailles.com; €2.69).

Versailles is easy to reach from Paris. The most convenient option is to take RER C5 (€3.25, 45 minutes, frequent), which goes from Paris' Left Bank RER stations to Versailles-Château-Rive Gauche station. There are also other rail connections, buses and organised tours.

DON'T MISS...

- ➔ Château de Versailles
- ➔ Gardens
- ➔ Marie Antoinette's estate
- ➔ Trianon palaces

PRACTICALITIES

- ➔ ☎ 01 30 83 78 00
- ➔ www.chateau-versailles.fr
- ➔ passport ticket incl estatewide access adult/child €18/free, with musical events €25/free, palace €15/free
- ➔ ⌚ 9am-6.30pm Tue-Sat, to 6pm Sun Apr-Oct, to 5.30pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar
- ➔ 🚉 RER Versailles-Château-Rive Gauche