

Welcome to Paris

Paris has a timeless familiarity for visitors, with architectural icons, exquisite cuisine, chic boutiques and priceless artistic treasures.

Iconic Architecture

The wrought-iron spire of the Eiffel Tower, the broad Arc de Triomphe guarding Paris' most glamorous avenue, the Champs-Élysées, the gargoyled Notre Dame cathedral, lamplit bridges spanning the Seine and art nouveau cafes spilling onto wicker-chair-lined terraces are indelibly etched in the minds of anyone who's visited the city – and the imaginations of anyone who hasn't (yet). But despite initial appearances, Paris' cityscape isn't static: there are some stunning modern and contemporary icons too, from the inside-out, industrial-style Centre Pompidou to the *mur végétal* (vertical garden) gracing the striking Musée du Quai Branly.

Glorious Food

Paris' dining is also iconic: France's reputation for its cuisine precedes it, and whether you seek a cosy neighbourhood bistro or a triple-Michelin-starred temple to gastronomy, you'll find every establishment prides itself on exquisite preparation and presentation of quality produce, invariably served with wine. Enticing patisseries, *boulangeries* (bakeries), *fromageries* (cheese shops) and crowded, colourful street markets are perfect for packing a picnic to take to the city's parks and gardens. A host of culinary courses offer instruction for all schedules, abilities and budgets.

Stylish Shopping

Parisians are synonymous with style and fashion shopping is the city's forte. Paris remains at the forefront of international trends, and browsing emerging and established designer boutiques and flagship *haute couture* houses is a quintessential part of any visit. You'll also find uberhip concept stores, quirky homewares shops, and resplendent art nouveau department stores, along with a trove of vintage shops and flea markets, atmospheric bookshops, adorable children's wear and toy shops, art and antique dealers, venerable shops selling state-of-the-art professional cookware, and, of course, gourmet food and wine shops galore.

Artistic Treasures

With an illustrious artistic pedigree – Renoir, Rodin, Picasso, Monet, Manet, Dalí and Van Gogh are but a few of the masters who lived and worked here over the years – Paris is one of the great art repositories of the world, harbouring treasures from antiquity onwards. In addition to big-hitters like the incomparable Louvre, the Musée d'Orsay's exceptional impressionist collection, and the Centre Pompidou's cache of modern and contemporary art, there are scores of smaller museums housing collections in every imaginable genre, and a diverse range of venues mounting major exhibitions through to off-beat installations.



Why I Love Paris

By Catherine Le Nevez, author

Paris' grandeur is inspiring but what I love most about the city is its intimacy. Its *quartiers* (quarters) are like a patchwork of villages, and while it's one of the world's major metropolises – with all of the culture and facilities that go with it – there's a real sense of community at the local shops, markets and cafes that hasn't changed since my childhood. Yet because every little 'village' has its own evolving character I'm constantly discovering and rediscovering hidden corners of the city.

For more about our authors, see p432.