

The Islands

ÎLE DE LA CITÉ | ÎLE ST-LOUIS

Neighbourhood Top Five

❶ Revelling in the crown-ing glory of medieval Gothic architecture and its bril-liantly bestial rooftop walk: **Cathédrale Notre Dame de Paris** (p202).

❷ Reading richly coloured biblical tales, exquisitely told with a stained-glass grace and beauty impossible

to find elsewhere at **Sainte-Chapelle** (p207).

❸ Learning how Marie-Antoinette and thousands of others lived out their final days before being be-headed at the **Conciergerie** (p208).

❹ Skipping across **Pont Neuf** (p208) and imagin-ing it Christo-wrapped.

❺ Savouring the sweetness of a famous Parisian **Berthillon** (p208) ice-cream.



For more detail of this area see Map p412 ➔

Explore: the Islands

Paris' island duo could not be more different – or more enchanting to meander on foot. Start the day on Île de la Cité, where the Conciergerie, Sainte-Chapelle and Pont Neuf fill the morning with historical drama and intrigue. Indulge in a light lunch and a glass of wine at Les Voyelles, then stroll east, cutting through the flower and bird markets to get to Cathédrale Notre Dame. Scale the cathedral towers, tour the cathedral interior and end with a serious flop in the grassy gardens of square Jean XXIII.

Or squirrel away the finer details of Notre Dame for day two and splurge the afternoon on exploring the delicious car-free lanes on neighbouring Île St-Louis – the islet with ample eating and boutique-shopping opportunities but not a sight in sight. End the day near Pont St-Louis and Pont Louis-Philippe, a romantic spot where lovers mingle with cello-playing buskers and teenage skateboarders. Come nightfall, the Seine dances with the watery reflections of streetlights, stop signals and the dim glow of curtained windows, brightened from time to time by the lamps of tourist boats cruising by.

Local Life

- **Art Exhibitions** Viewing one of the cutting-edge, contemporary art exhibitions hosted by the Conciergerie (p208) is the most exciting way to experience Europe's largest surviving medieval hall.
- **Markets** Île de la Cité's daily flower market, Marché aux Fleurs (p210), has brightened up place Louis Lépin since 1808 and on Sunday it becomes a bird market, atmospheric to meander.
- **Free Entertainment** Pont au Double (linking Notre Dame with the Left Bank) and Pont St-Louis (linking the two islands) buzz with street performers in summer.
- **A Parisian Picnic** Find yourself a bench in the grassy gardens behind Cathédrale Notre Dame (p202) to admire its flying buttresses between sandwich bites; Huré (p208) is the gourmet takeaway-sandwich spot.

Getting There & Away

- **Metro** The closest stations are Cité (line 4) and Pont Marie (line 7).
- **Bus** Bus 47 links Île de la Cité with the Marais and Gare de l'Est; bus 21 with Opéra and Gare St-Lazare. On Île St-Louis it's bus 67 to Jardin des Plantes and place d'Italie, and bus 87 through the Latin Quarter to École Militaire and Champ de Mars.
- **Bicycle** Île de la Cité has a trio of handy Vélib' stations: place Louis Lépine by the Cité metro station, and also at 1 quai aux Fleurs and 5 rue d'Arcole, both by Cathédrale Notre Dame.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Queues to see the sunlight stream through spectacular stained-glass at Sainte-Chapelle are staggeringly long. To dodge the line and sail through with little or no waiting, first visit the Conciergerie and buy a combination ticket covering admission to both the old prison and the chapel. With this *billet jumelé* firmly in hand, you skip the ticket queue at Sainte-Chapelle and enter via the line for museum-pass holders and combination tickets.

Best Places to Eat

- Berthillon (p208)
- Les Voyelles (p209)
- Huré (p208)
- Le Tastevin (p209)
- Mon Vieil Ami (p209)

For reviews, see p208 ➡

Best Places to Drink

- Café Saint Régis (p209)
- Taverne Henri IV (p209)
- La Charlotte de l'Isle (p209)

For reviews, see p209 ➡

Best Places to Romance

- Hidden corners, stairwells and the rooftop of Notre Dame bell towers (p202)
- Pont St-Louis and Pont Louis-Philippe
- Pont Neuf (p208)
- Square du Vert Galant
- Square Jean XXIII

For reviews, see p208 ➡