

# INTRODUCING PARIS



*As iconic as an icon can get, the much-snapped Eiffel Tower (p116)*

JAN STROMME

Well informed, eloquent and oh-so-romantic, the Ville-Lumière (City of Light) is a philosopher, a poet, a crooner. As it always has been, Paris is a million different things to a million different people.

Paris has all but exhausted the superlatives that can reasonably be applied to any city. Notre Dame and the Eiffel Tower – at sunrise, at sunset, at night – have been described countless times, as have the Seine and the subtle (and not-so-subtle) differences between the Left and Right Banks. But what writers have been unable to capture is the grandness and even the magic of this incomparable city.

Paris probably has more familiar landmarks than any other city in the world. As a result, first-time visitors often arrive in the French capital with all sorts of expectations: of grand vistas, of intellectuals discussing weighty matters in cafés, of romance along the Seine, of naughty nightclub revues, of rude people who won't speak English. If you look hard enough, you can probably find all of those. But another approach is to set aside the preconceptions of Paris and explore the city's avenues and backstreets as if the tip of the Eiffel Tower or the spire of Notre Dame wasn't about to pop into view at any moment.

You'll soon discover (as so many others have before you) that Paris is enchanting almost everywhere, at any time, even 'in the winter, when it drizzles' and 'in the summer, when it sizzles', as Cole Porter put it. And you'll be back. Trust us.

## PARIS LIFE

Problem is, if you postpone your next trip to the City of Light for too long you might end up not recognising the place. While the Paris of Haussmann and Hugo and Toulouse-Lautrec is not – for better or worse – going to disappear overnight, the city is on the verge of redefining itself big time. President Nicolas Sarkozy's 10 able-bodied architects, whom he asked several years ago to help create *Le Grand Paris* (Greater Paris), have unveiled their plans. Predictably the ideas run the gamut from the sublime to the ridiculous, but all involve expansion beyond the *bd Périphérique*, the ring road 'moat' that separates Fortress Paris and its two million mostly well-heeled residents from the six million living in the usually unspeakable *banlieues* (suburbs), which gave then Interior Minister Sarkozy such a *mal de tête* (headache) back in 2005. The plans are, well, grand, with light-rail systems looping around the city's periphery, and eyesore train tracks submerged below parkland. It's not something those living *entre les murs* (within the walls, ie in central Paris) are looking upon kindly.

But the most ambitious scheme of all would involve the creation of a 'maritime metropolis' (unlike most other successful world-class cities, Paris does not have easy access to a port) by linking Paris by one-hour high-speed train with a newly constructed port called Paris Normandy at Le Havre. Sarkozy's own trip to the city 200km northwest of the capital proved to be his very own road to Damascus. Recalling a phrase attributed to his idol, Napoleon Bonaparte, the president gushed: 'Paris, Rouen, Le Havre – a single city with the Seine as the main street.' Pardon? But who knows? Before long we may all be singing 'I love Paris-Rouen-Le Havre in the springtime, I love Paris-Rouen-Le Havre in the fall...'

'The city is on the verge of redefining itself big time.'

WILL GALTER



The café still plays a pivotal role in Parisian life

# HIGHLIGHTS



WILL SALTER

## ART PORTFOLIO

*With more than 100 museums in Paris, there's something here for every interest, however obscure. And art is not just 'bullion' stashed away in safe houses. It can also be found out on the streets and down in the metro.*



BRUCE YUAN-YUE BI



RICHARD NEBSKY

### 1 Musée de l'Orangerie

Monet's sublime *Décorations des Nymphéas* (Water Lilies) are housed in two purpose-built rooms (p77).

### 2 Palais de Tokyo

This fine art-deco 'palace' exhibits ephemeral artwork and installations meant to engage the viewer (p120).

### 3 Artists in Montmartre

Art takes to the streets – literally – throughout Paris, but especially up in Montmartre (p132).

### 4 Musée d'Orsay

This erstwhile train station contains some of the world's most important works by impressionists and postimpressionists (p107).

### 5 Louvre Pyramid

Lambasted when it opened in 1989, IM Pei's Grande Pyramide (Great Pyramid) welcomes all and sundry to the Louvre (p70).

### 6 Musée Rodin

The work of France's greatest sculptor is as fresh and modern as it was in the 19th century (p111).



WILL SALTER



IZZET KERIBAR



NEIL SETCHFIELD



JEAN BERNARD CARILLET

## FOOD & WINE

*It is said that the French think mainly about two things: what they eat and what they drink. And an inordinate amount of time is spent thinking about, talking about and consuming lunch and dinner – matched with a suitable wine, of course.*



TRAVEL DIVISION IMAGES / ALAMY



MARTIN MOOS



KATHRYN KLEINMAN / GETTY

## 1 Classic Eating

Parisians are faithful rather than fickle when it comes to things comestible, and old favourites never die (p239).

## 2 Contemporary Eating

The latest buzz word on the Paris dining scene is the *néo-bistro* (new bistro): small, informal, outstanding (p214).

## 3 Boulangeries

They say that a Parisian will eat bread with bread, and there's no shortage of choices at most bakeries (p215).

## 4 Wine

Beef with Bordeaux, shellfish with Champagne, foie gras with Sauternes – Parisians are always in search of the perfect match (p241).

## 5 Cheese

The choice on offer at a *fromagerie* (cheese shop) in Paris can be overwhelming (p215).

## 6 Pâtisseries

Parisians love *sucreries* (sweet things) and neon-coloured macaroons are the nibble of the moment (p235).

## 7 Markets

Neighbourhood markets are very much a part of life in Paris (p222).

## 8 Chalkboard Menu

A restaurant *carte* (menu) outside on *l'ardoise* (a chalkboard) will help you to decide before going in whether the place is to your taste and budget (p217).

## 9 Steak-Frites

A standard feature of tourist menus in Paris, *steak-frites* is a deceptively simple but deliciously satisfying dish (p216).



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WILL SALTER



6

WILL SALTER



7

OLIVER STREWE



BRUCE YUAN-YUE BI



DOMINIQUE CHARRIAD / GETTY

## PARIS À LA MODE

*Parisians always seem to look good – at work, at play, at rest. It has a lot to do with their inherent sense of style. When you see what's on offer in the boutiques, on the catwalk and after dark, you'll begin to feel a lot like them too.*



WILL SALTER

### 1 Les Grands Magasins

The big department stores, such as Le Bon Marché (p199) and Galeries Lafayette (p202), have excellent couture collections.

### 2 Classic Labels

Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Agnès B, Jean-Paul Gaultier – Paris is awash with world-famous and coveted *étiquettes* (labels) (p203).

### 3 Boutique Streets

The rue des Francs Bourgeois in the Marais is lined with fashionable boutiques selling clothing, hats, home furnishings and stationery (p205).

### 4 Chic Shelter

Stylish boutique hotels can be found throughout Paris, but tried-and-true luxurious ones like the Hôtel Meurice (p328) are concentrated around the Louvre.

### 5 Fashion under Glass

'Fashion is in the sky, in the street,' said Coco Chanel, and it's also in plenty of Parisian museums such as the Musée Galliera de la Mode de la Ville de Paris (p121).



JEAN BERNARD CARLLET



BRUCE YUAN-YUE BI



WILL SALTER



SELECTA / ALAMY



PARIS MARAIS / ALAMY

## 6 'See & Be Seen' Scene

A choice seat on the terrace of a fashionable café along the bd St-Germain (p105) or the place des Vosges (p146) is like gold dust in fine weather.

## 7 Nights Out

A night at the opera (p306) – or theatre or ballet – followed by a late-night brasserie meal or cocktail is a classic night out in Paris.

## 8 Vintage Paris

The backstreets of Paris and the incomparable *passages couverts* (covered shopping arcades) (p182) offer a wealth of items for sale.



# ANGELS IN THE ARCHITECTURE

The French capital is a treasure trove of architectural styles: from Roman arenas and Gothic cathedrals to postmodernist cubes and glass pyramids that not only look great but serve a function. You'll find interesting examples scattered throughout the city.



## 1 Cathédrale de Notre Dame de Paris

The most beautiful and complex Gothic sight in Paris, Notre Dame (p81) is one of the first ports of call for many visitors.

## 2 Centre Pompidou

The 'bad boy' of exhibition spaces when it opened in 1977, this centre of art and culture (p78) and its 'insides-out' approach to architecture now has imitators worldwide.

## 3 Musée du Quai Branly

The architectural 'accessory' of the moment, the 'vertical garden' puts new meaning to the phrase 'growing up in Paris' (p57).

## 4 La Défense

This futuristic business and residential district (p175) to the west of the city centre is a happy hunting ground for both modern architecture and public art.





RACHEL LEWIS



NEIL SETCHFELD



BRUCE YUAN-YUE BI



JEAN-BERNARD CARILLET

### 5 Guimard Metro Entrance

The noodle-like pale-green metalwork and glass canopy designed by art-nouveau architect Hector Guimard (1867–1942) still grace dozens of metro entrances (p103).

### 6 Basilique du Sacré Coeur

The view from the steps of this basilica (p132) on top of Butte de Montmartre (Montmartre Hill) is among the best in Paris.

### 7 Versailles

The sculpted and gilded chateau at Versailles (p354), southwest of Paris, is a monument to opulence and royal extravagance.

### 8 Panthéon

The world's largest secular 'church', this enormous mausoleum (p99) contains the mortal remains of the great and the good in French history.



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WILL SALTER



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WILL SALTER

### 1 Couple in Park

*Paris, Je t'aime* (Paris, I Love You) – it's a phrase, a film and a lifetime commitment in the city for lovers (p53).

### 2 Paris Plages

The Seine is at its most amusing when some of its banks are transformed into the 'beaches' of Paris Plages (p19).

### 3 Dustless Highway

A tour boat glides quietly past the quays on the Seine (p401).

### 4 Cycling in Town

The Vélib' scheme (p384) has put tens of thousands of bicycles within easy reach of most people, creating a city à deux roues (on two wheels).

## EN PLEIN AIR

*Paris loves the great outdoors, be it watching the world go by from the terrace of a café or horsing around in one of the city's many parks and gardens. A favourite playground is the Seine, especially in summer when some of its banks are transformed into the world's greatest 'urban beach'.*



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JOHN ELK III

# THE AUTHORS

## Steve Fallon



Steve, who has worked on every edition of *Paris* and *France* except the first, was surrounded by things French from a very early age when his best friend's mother thought it would be a 'bunny day' (or was that a

*bonne idée?*) to rock them in the same cradle. Convinced that Parisians were seriously devoid of a sense of humour after he and said best friend dropped water-filled balloons on the heads of passers-by from a 5e arrondissement hotel balcony at age 16, he nevertheless went back to the 'City of Light' five years later to complete a degree in French at the Sorbonne. Based in East London, Steve will be just one Underground stop away from Paris when Eurostar trains *finally* begin departing from Stratford. Steve was the coordinating author and wrote the *Introducing Paris*, *Highlights*, *Getting Started*, *Background*, *Arts & Architecture*, *Gay & Lesbian Paris*, *Excursions* and *Transport* chapters. He co-wrote the *Neighbourhoods*, *Shopping*, *Eating*, *Drinking*, *Nightlife & the Arts*, *Sports & Activities* and *Sleeping* chapters.

## Chris Pitts



Christopher Pitts has lived in Paris since 2001. He first started writing about the city as a means to buy baguettes – and to impress a certain Parisian (it worked; they're now married with two kids). Over the past decade he

has written for various publications, in addition to working as a translator and editor. Visit his website at [www.christopherpitts.net](http://www.christopherpitts.net). Chris wrote the *Directory* and co-wrote the *Neighbourhoods*, *Shopping*, *Eating*, *Drinking*, *Nightlife & the Arts*, *Sports & Activities* and *Sleeping* chapters.

## Nicola Williams



Lonely Planet author, independent travel writer and editorial consultant Nicola Williams has lived in France and written about it for more than a decade. From her hillside house on the southern shore of Lake Geneva, it's a

quick and easy hop to Paris, where she has spent endless years eating her way around and revelling in its extraordinary art and architecture – solo and *en famille*. Nicola has worked on numerous other titles for Lonely Planet, including *France*, *Discover France*, *Provence & the Côte d'Azur* and *The Loire*. She blogs at [tripalong.wordpress.com](http://tripalong.wordpress.com) and tweets @Trip along. Nicola wrote the *Les Quartiers* chapter and co-wrote the *Neighbourhoods*, *Shopping*, *Eating*, *Drinking*, *Nightlife & the Arts*, *Sports & Activities* and *Sleeping* chapters.

## LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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# GETTING STARTED

Paris is a dream destination for countless reasons, but among the most obvious is that it requires so very little advance planning. Tourist literature abounds, maps are excellent and readily available, and the staff at tourist offices are often helpful and efficient. Paris is so well developed and organised that you don't have to plan extensively before your trip.

But this is fine only if your budget is unlimited, you don't have an interest in any particular period of architecture or type of music, and you'll eat or drink anything set down in front of you. This is Paris, one of the most-visited cities of the world, and depending on the time of year you'll find yourself in competition with either everybody or everybody and their brother. First and foremost, book your accommodation well ahead. And if you have specific interests – live big-name jazz, blockbuster art exhibitions, top-end restaurants – you'll certainly want to make sure that the things you expect to see and do will be available or open to you when you arrive. The key here is advance planning.

While Paris is a wonderful place to splurge on once-in-a-lifetime treats and adventures (p22), you'll be surprised at how much you can see for free (p96) or for a lot less than you'd expected. To plan a dream getaway to match your budget, see p22 for average costs and money-saving tips.

## WHEN TO GO

As the old song says, Paris is lovely in springtime – however, winterlike relapses and heavy rains are not uncommon in the usually beautiful month of April. Though 'April in Paris' is the stuff of which dreams are made, the best months to visit are probably May and June – but early, before the hordes of tourists descend. Autumn is also pleasant – some people say the best months of the year to visit are September and October – but, of course, the days are getting shorter and in October hotel rooms are booked solid by businesspeople attending conferences and trade shows.

During winter Paris has all sorts of cultural events going on, while in summer the weather is warm – sometimes sizzling. In any case, in August Parisians flee for the beaches to the west and south, and many restaurateurs and café owners lock up and leave town too. It's true that you will find more places open in summer than even a decade ago, but it can still feel like a ghost town in certain districts. For further information on Paris' climate, see p392.

To ensure that your trip does (or perhaps does *not*) coincide with a public holiday, see p396. For a list of festivals and other events to plan around, see the following section.

## ADVANCE PLANNING

**Well ahead** Try to book your accommodation months ahead, especially if it's high season and you want to stay in a boutique hotel like Mama Shelter (p348), a quirky little number like the Hôtel du 7e Art (p345), a 'find' such as the Hôtel Jeanne d'Arc (p345), or some place offering exceptional value for money such as the Hôtel Henri IV (p330). Take a look at some of the 'what's on' websites (p21) or the entertainment magazines *Pariscope* and *L'Officiel des Spectacles* (p294).

**A month before you go** If you're interested in serious fine dining at places like Le Grand Véfour (p221) or crowd-pleasers like Les Ombres (p238), book a table. Now is also the time to visit the Fnac and/or Virgin Megastore websites (p294) to get seats for a big-ticket concert, musical or play.

**Two weeks before you go** Blockbuster exhibitions at such venues as the Grand Palais (p129) or Centre Pompidou (p78) – or even a visit to the Louvre (p70) – can be booked in advance online via Fnac or Virgin Megastore for a modest fee. Sign up for an email newsletter via Expatica (p21) and check out some of those excellent tweets and blogs (p406). If you're interested in Paris' new crop of supper clubs (p262), think about booking now.

**A day or two before you go** Make sure your bookings are in order and you've followed all the instructions outlined in this chapter.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Innumerable festivals, cultural and sporting events and trade shows take place in Paris throughout the year; weekly details appear in *Pariscope* and *L'Officiel des Spectacles* (p294). You can also find them listed under 'What's On' on the website of the **Paris Convention & Visitors Bureau** ([www.parisinfo.com](http://www.parisinfo.com)). The following abbreviated list gives you a taste of what to expect throughout the year.

### January & February

#### GRANDE PARADE DE PARIS

[www.parisparade.com](http://www.parisparade.com)

The Great Paris Parade is relatively subdued after the previous night's shenanigans (p21). It takes place on the afternoon of New Year's Day, with marching and carnival bands, dance acts and so on. It used to be held in the small backstreets of Montmartre but has become so popular that it has spread to the Grand Boulevards, from rue du Faubourg St-Denis at bd Bonne Nouvelle in the 10e to place de la Madeleine in the 8e.

#### LOUIS XVI COMMEMORATIVE MASS

[www.monuments-nationaux.fr](http://www.monuments-nationaux.fr)

On the Sunday closest to 21 January, royalists and right-wingers attend a mass at the Chapelle Expiatoire (p130) marking the execution by guillotine of King Louis XVI in 1793.

#### FASHION WEEK

[www.pretparis.com](http://www.pretparis.com), in French

Prêt-à-porter, the ready-to-wear fashion salon held twice a year (in late January and in September), is a must for fashion buffs and takes place at the Parc des Expositions at Porte de Versailles in the 15e (metro Porte de Versailles), southwest of the city centre. For *haute couture* (high fashion)

and other collections, see **Mode à Paris** ([www.modeaparis.com](http://www.modeaparis.com)).

#### CHINESE NEW YEAR

[www.paris.fr](http://www.paris.fr)

Dragon parades and other festivities are held in late January or early February in two distinct Chinatowns: the smaller, more authentic one in the 3e, taking in rue du Temple, rue au Maire and rue de Turbigo (metro Temple or Arts et Métiers); and the larger, flashier one in the 13e in between porte de Choisy, porte d'Ivry and bd Masséna (metro Porte de Choisy, Port d'Ivry or Tolbiac).

#### SALON INTERNATIONAL DE L'AGRICULTURE

[www.salon-agriculture.com](http://www.salon-agriculture.com)

A 10-day international agricultural fair with produce and animals turned into starter and main-course dishes from all over France, held at the Parc des Expositions at Porte de Versailles in the 15e (metro Porte de Versailles) from late February to early March.

### March–May

#### BANLIEUES BLEUES

[www.banlieuesbleues.org](http://www.banlieuesbleues.org), in French

The 'Suburban Blues' jazz, blues and R&B festival is held over five weeks in March and April in the northern suburbs of Paris, including St-Denis (p173), and attracts some big-name talent.

#### SALON DU LIVRE

[www.salondulivreparis.com](http://www.salondulivreparis.com)

The largest international book fair in France takes place over six days (usually Friday to Wednesday) in mid-March at the Parc des Expositions at Porte de Versailles in the 15e (metro Porte de Versailles).

## DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- an adaptor plug for electrical appliances (if not from Europe)
- binoculars for viewing detail on churches and other buildings
- an immersion water heater or small kettle for an impromptu cup of tea or coffee
- tea bags if you need that cuppa since the French drink buckets of the herbal variety but not much of the black stuff
- premoistened towelettes or a large cotton handkerchief to soak in fountains and use to cool off in the hot weather
- sunglasses and sunblock, even in the cooler months
- swimsuit and thongs (flip-flops) for Paris Plage or swimming pool
- a Swiss Army knife, with such essentials as a bottle opener and strong corkscrew

## PRINTEMPS DU CINÉMA

[www.printempsducinema.com](http://www.printempsducinema.com), in French  
Selected cinemas across Paris offer film-goers a unique entry fee of €3.50 over three days (usually Sunday, Monday and Tuesday) sometime around 21 March.

## FOIRE DU TRÔNE

[www.foiredutrone.com](http://www.foiredutrone.com), in French  
This huge funfair, with 350 attractions spread over 10 hectares, is held on the pelouse de Reuilly of the Bois de Vincennes (metro Porte Dorée) for eight weeks from early April to late May.

## MARATHON INTERNATIONAL DE PARIS

[www.parismarathon.com](http://www.parismarathon.com), in French  
The Paris International Marathon, usually held on the first or second Sunday of April, starts on the av des Champs-Élysées, 8e, and finishes on av Foch, in the 16e, attracting some 40,000 runners from around the world. The [Semi-Marathon de Paris](#) ([www.semideparis.com](http://www.semideparis.com)) is a half-marathon held in early March; see the website for map and registration details.

## FOIRE DE PARIS

[www.foiredeparis.fr](http://www.foiredeparis.fr), in French  
This huge modern-living fair, including crafts, gadgets and widgets as well as food and wine, is held from late April to early May at the Parc des Expositions at Porte de Versailles in the 15e (metro Porte de Versailles).

## LA NUIT DES MUSÉES EUROPÉENNE

[www.nuitdesmusees.culture.fr](http://www.nuitdesmusees.culture.fr)  
Key museums across Paris throw open their doors at 6pm for one Saturday night in mid-May – the European Museums Night – and don't close till late. Some also organise special events.

## ART DT-GERMAIN DES PRÉS

[www.artsaintgermaindespres.com](http://www.artsaintgermaindespres.com), in French  
Some 70 galleries in the 6e come together in mid-May to showcase their top artists.

## ATELIERS D'ARTISTES DE BELLEVILLE

[www.ateliers-artistes-belleville.org](http://www.ateliers-artistes-belleville.org), in French  
More than 200 painters, sculptors and other artists in Belleville (metro Belleville) in the 10e open their studio doors to visitors over four days (Friday to Monday) in late May in

an event that has now been going for two decades.

## FRENCH TENNIS OPEN

[www.rolandgarros.com](http://www.rolandgarros.com)  
The glitzy Internationaux de France de Tennis – the Grand Slam – takes place over two weeks from late May to early June at Stade Roland Garros (metro Porte d'Auteuil) at the southern edge of the Bois de Boulogne in the 16e.

## June–August

### FOIRE ST-GERMAIN

[www.foiresaintgermain.org](http://www.foiresaintgermain.org), in French  
This six-week-long festival of concerts and theatre from early June to mid-July takes place on the place St-Sulpice, 6e (metro St-Sulpice) and various other venues in the quartier St-Germain.

### FESTIVAL DE SAINT DENIS

[www.festival-saint-denis.com](http://www.festival-saint-denis.com), in French  
This prestigious cycle of classical music concerts takes place in the Basilique de St-Denis (p173) and various other venues in St-Denis just north of Paris throughout the month of June. Book tickets well ahead.

### FÊTE DE LA MUSIQUE

[www.fetedelamusique.fr](http://www.fetedelamusique.fr), in French  
This national music festival, now in its third decade, welcomes in summer on summer solstice (21 June), caters to a great diversity of tastes (jazz, reggae and even classical)

# top picks

## JUST FOR KIDS

- [CinéAqua](#) (p120) The ultimate in high-tech aquariums as only defined by the 21st century.
- [Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie](#) (p142) For kids of all ages, from the didactic to pure pleasure (Géode, Cinaxe etc).
- [Eiffel Tower](#) (p116) What kid doesn't want to climb a giant Mechano/Erector Set?
- [Jardin d'Acclimatation](#) (p122) A funfair to fill a day.
- [Ménagerie du Jardin des Plantes](#) (p98) The only place to observe wildlife in Paris at the time of research.

and features staged and impromptu live performances all over the city.

## GAY PRIDE MARCH

[www.gaypride.fr](http://www.gaypride.fr), in French

This colourful Saturday-afternoon parade (called *Marche des Fiertés* in French) in late June through the Marais to Bastille celebrates Gay Pride Day, with various bars and clubs sponsoring floats, and participants in some pretty outrageous costumes.

## PARIS JAZZ FESTIVAL

[www.paris.fr](http://www.paris.fr)

There are free jazz concerts every Saturday and Sunday afternoon in June and July in the Parc Floral de Paris (metro Château de Vincennes).

## LA GOUTTE D'OR EN FÊTE

[www.gouttedorenfete.org](http://www.gouttedorenfete.org), in French

This week-long world-music festival (featuring rai, reggae and rap) is held at square Léon, 18e (metro Barbès Rochechouart or Château Rouge) in late June.

## PARIS CINÉMA

[www.pariscinema.org](http://www.pariscinema.org)

This 12-day festival in the first half of July sees rare and restored films screened in selected cinemas across Paris.

## BASTILLE DAY (14 JULY)

[www.paris.fr](http://www.paris.fr)

Paris is the place to be on France's national day. Late on the night of the 13th, *bals des sapeurs-pompiers* (dances sponsored by Paris' firefighters, who are considered sex symbols in France) are held at fire stations around the city. At 10am on the 14th, there's a military and fire-brigade parade along av des Champs-Élysées, accompanied by a fly-past of fighter aircraft and helicopters. In the evening, a huge display of *feux d'artifice* (fireworks) is held at around 11pm on the Champ de Mars in the 7e.

## PARIS PLAGES

[www.paris.fr](http://www.paris.fr)

Initiated in 2002, 'Paris Beach' is one of the most inspired and successful city recreational events in the world. Across four weeks, from mid-July to mid-August, two waterfront areas with different themes are transformed into sand and pebble

# top picks

## FOR FIRST-TIMERS

- **Eiffel Tower** (p116) Come on, already. You can't say you've been to Paris until you have at least gazed at *la madame*. But – oooh la la! – let's try a new position: from the bottom looking upward. *C'est si bon*.
- **Av des Champs-Élysées** (p125) It's not our favourite Parisian boulevard by any stretch of the imagination but it's another must-see. Again, be different. Stand in front of the eternal flame below the arch as night falls and watch the traffic rush past. Surreal.
- **Notre Dame** (p81) Christendom's most beautiful house of worship can be a mob-scene of picture-snapping infidels a lot of the time. Avoid the maddening crowds and attend Mass; you can see a lot from the pews. Failing that, there are usually organ concerts on Sunday afternoon around 5pm.
- **Monet's Water Lilies** (p77) Even we refuse to brave the crowds blocking da Vinci's (quite small) *Mona Lisa* in the Louvre. Head instead to the nearby Musée de l'Orangerie and Monet's sublime (and much larger) *Decorations des Nymphéas*.
- **Food market** (p222) Any one on our list will do but for a good overview of what's on offer in spades, check out our favourite Marché Bastille (Map p158).

'beaches', complete with sun beds, beach umbrellas, atomisers, lounge chairs and palm trees. They make up the 1.5km-long stretch along the Right Bank embankment (Voie Georges Pompidou) from the Pont Neuf (metro Pont Neuf) in the 1er to the Pont de Sully (metro Sully Morland) in the 4e, with a tropical feel to it; and a kilometre or so along the Bassin de la Villette in the 19e from the Rotonde de la Villette (metro Jaurès) to Rue de Crimée (metro Crimée), devoted to boating and other water sports. The beaches are open from 8am to midnight daily.

## TOUR DE FRANCE

[www.letour.fr](http://www.letour.fr)

The last of 21 stages of this prestigious, 3500km-long cycling event finishes with a race up av des Champs-Élysées on the third or fourth Sunday of July, as it has done since 1975.



## September & October

### JAZZ À LA VILLETTE

[www.jazzalavillette.com](http://www.jazzalavillette.com), in French

This super two-week jazz festival in the first half of September has sessions in Parc de la Villette, at the Cité de la Musique and in surrounding bars.

### FESTIVAL D'AUTOMNE

[www.festival-automne.com](http://www.festival-automne.com)

The Autumn Festival of arts, now around for almost three decades, has painting, music, dance and theatre at venues throughout the city from mid-September to late December.

### JOURNÉES EUROPÉENNES DU PATRIMOINE

[www.journeesdupatrimoine.culture.fr](http://www.journeesdupatrimoine.culture.fr), in French

As elsewhere in Europe on the third week-end in September – known as European Heritage Days in English – Paris opens the doors of buildings (eg embassies, government ministries, corporate offices – even the Palais de l'Élysée) normally off-limits to outsiders.

### TECHNO PARADE

[www.technoparade.fr](http://www.technoparade.fr), in French

Part of the annual festival called Rendez-vous Électroniques (Electronic Meeting), this parade involving some 20 floats and carrying 150 musicians and DJs wends its way on the periphery of the Marais on the third Saturday of September, starting and ending at place de la Bastille, 12e.

### NUIT BLANCHE

[www.paris.fr](http://www.paris.fr)

'White Night' (or more accurately translated as 'All Nighter') is when Paris 'does' New York and becomes 'the city that doesn't sleep'. It's a cultural festival that lasts from sundown until sunrise – from 7pm to 7am – on the first Saturday and Sunday of October, with museums and recreational facilities such as swimming pools joining bars and clubs and staying open till the very wee hours.

### FÊTE DES VENDANGES DE MONTMARTRE

[www.fetedesvendangesdemontmartre.com](http://www.fetedesvendangesdemontmartre.com), in French

This festival is held over five days from Wednesday to Sunday on the second week-

end in October following the harvesting of grapes from the Clos Montmartre (p179), with costumes, speeches and a parade.

### FOIRE INTERNATIONALE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN

[www.fiac.com](http://www.fiac.com)

Better known as FIAC, this huge contemporary art fair is held over four days in late October, with some 160 galleries represented at the Louvre and the Grand Palais.

## November & December

### AFRICOLOR

[www.africolor.com](http://www.africolor.com), in French

This six-week-long African music festival is held for the most part in venues in the suburbs surrounding Paris (eg St-Denis, St-Ouen, Montreuil) from mid-November to late December.

### JUMPING INTERNATIONAL DE PARIS

[www.salon-cheval.com](http://www.salon-cheval.com), in French

This annual showjumping tournament features the world's most celebrated jumpers at the Palais Omnisports de Paris-Bercy in the 12e (metro Bercy) over nine days in the first half of December. The annual International Showjumping Competition forms part of the Salon du Cheval at the Parc des Expositions at Porte de Versailles in the 15e (metro Porte de Versailles).

## top picks

### UNUSUAL EVENTS

- **Paris Plages** The next best thing after the seaside along France's smallest urban beaches.
- **Gay Pride March** Feathers and beads and participants in and out of the same make this Paris' most outrageous annual event.
- **Fête des Vendanges de Montmartre** Lots of noise for a bunch of old (and, some say, sour) grapes, but the street party is fun.
- **Louis XVI Commemorative Mass** Right-wing sob-fest for aristocrats, pretenders and their hangers-on – did 1789 even happen?
- **Salon Internationale de l'Agriculture** Lots to smell (cowpats), hear (braying donkeys), see (lamb's gambolling), eat and drink at Europe's largest agricultural fair.

## CHRISTMAS EVE MASS

Mass is celebrated at midnight on Christmas Eve at many Paris churches, including Notre Dame, but get there by 11pm to find a place.

## NEW YEAR'S EVE

Bd St-Michel (5e), place de la Bastille (11e), the Eiffel Tower (7e) and, above all, av des Champs-Élysées (8e) are the places to be to welcome in the New Year in the City of Light.

## COSTS & MONEY

If you stay in a hostel, or in a room without a shower or a toilet in a bottom-end hotel, and have picnics rather than dining out, it is possible to stay in Paris for €50 a day per person. A couple staying in a two-star hotel and eating one cheap restaurant meal each day should count on spending at least €80 a day per person. Eating out frequently, ordering wine and treating yourself to any of the many luxuries on offer in Paris will increase these figures considerably.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

In terms of websites to consult before you go, [Lonely Planet](http://www.lonelyplanet.com) ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)) is a good start for many of the city's more useful links. The following English-language websites are useful for learning more about Paris (and France) before setting out. For much more on what's going on in the city, check out some of the local blogs (p406).

**Expatica** ([www.expatica.com](http://www.expatica.com)) Lifestyle website for expats living in countries worldwide, including France, with regularly updated news, features and blogs.

**French Government Tourism Office** ([www.francetourism.com](http://www.francetourism.com)) Official tourism site with all manner of information about travel in France, with lots and lots on Paris too.

**Go Go Paris! Culture!** ([www.gogoparis.com](http://www.gogoparis.com)) Clubs, hangouts, art gigs, dance around town, eating and drinking – everything a culture vulture living in Paris needs.

**Mairie de Paris** ([www.paris.fr](http://www.paris.fr)) Your primary source of information about Paris, with everything from opening times and what's on to the latest statistics direct from the Hôtel de Ville.

**Paris Convention & Visitors Bureau** ([www.parisinfo.com](http://www.parisinfo.com)) The official site of the Office de Tourisme et de Congrès – the city's tourist office – is super, with more links than you'll ever need.

## HOW MUCH?

An hour's car parking from €1.50 (street), €2 (garage)

Average/fair/good seat at the opera €25/55/75

Cinema ticket €6 to €10.50 (adult)

Copy of *Le Monde* newspaper €1.40

Coffee at a café bar from €1.20

Grand crème at Champs-Élysées café terrace €5.50

Metro/bus ticket €1.60 (€11.60 for 10)

Entry to the Louvre €9.50 (adult)

Litre of bottled mineral water from €0.70 (supermarket), €1 (corner shop)

Pint of local beer from €6.50 (€5 at happy hour)

Pop music CD €10 to €18

Street snack from €2.50 (basic crêpe or galette)

**Paris Digest** ([www.parisdigest.com](http://www.parisdigest.com)) Useful site for making pretravel arrangements, with a forum.

## SUSTAINABLE PARIS

For a densely populated urban centre inhabited for more than two millennia, Paris is a surprisingly healthy and clean city. Thanks mainly to Baron Haussmann (p35), who radically reshaped the city in the second half of the 19th century, a small army of street sweepers brush litter into the gutters from where it is hosed into sewers, and a city ordinance requires residents to have the facades of their buildings cleaned every 10 years.

These days, despite the city's excellent (and cheap) public transport system, Haussmann's wide boulevards are usually choked with traffic, and air pollution is undoubtedly the city's major environmental hazard. But things have improved tremendously on that score: the current (at the time of research) city leadership, which came to power in 2001 in coalition with the Green Party, first restricted traffic on some roads at certain times and created lanes only for buses, taxis and bicycles. Then, in 2007, in an unprecedented move for a city its size, Paris launched the Vélib' communal bicycle rental programme (p384). It has fundamentally changed the way Parisians (and footsore Lonely Planet authors) live and work. In April 2010 the government announced plans to turn a 3.5km section of highway on the Left

## SIGNATURE SPLURGES

- Sip a cocktail – ideally a Bloody Mary, the bar’s own invention – at **Harry’s New York Bar** (p277).
- Tuck into *le baiser* **Ladurée** (layered almond cake with strawberries and cream) at **Ladurée** (p235), the most famous *pâtisserie* (cake shop) on the Champs-Élysées.
- Splash out on an evening *menu* at **Les Ombres** (p238) in the shadows (literally and by name) of the Eiffel Tower.
- Be queen of the night (regardless of sex and preferences) at **Hôtel Caron de Beaumarchais** (p344), about as over the top as you can get in hotel decoration.
- Pamper yourself at the overindulgent hammam of **Les Bains du Marais** (p310).
- Have your own personal scent mixed at the renowned *parfumerie* **Fragonard** (p205).
- Enjoy a night at the opera (or ballet), preferably at the **Palais Garnier** (p125), the more ornate of the two opera houses.
- Choose your open CD compilations at the musically renowned **Buddha Bar** (p283).
- Select a fine vintage wine or an excellent *eau-de-vie* (fruit brandy) from **Lavinia** (p195), one of the finest (and poshest) wine shops in town.
- Spin your wheels in pastel-coloured luxury on a vintage Vespa from **Left Bank Scooters** (p387).

Bank between the Musée d’Orsay and Pont d’Alma into a pedestrian- and bike-only zone.

If you want to keep Paris clean, leave your car at home and resist the temptation to rent one unless you’re touring around the Île de France (p354). Instead, bring or rent a bike (p384), but remember that the Vélib’ rental system is more of a way of getting from A to B than a recreational facility; enjoy the city on foot – Paris is an eminently walkable city (see p178); or use the public transport system, which is cheap and extremely efficient.

For further tips on how you can reduce your impact on the environment, contact **Les Amis de la Nature** (☎ 01 42 85 29 84; [www.amisnature-pariscentre.org](http://www.amisnature-pariscentre.org), in French; 30 quai des Célestins, 75004) or the **World Wildlife Fund France** (☎ 01 55 25 84 84; [www.wwf.fr](http://www.wwf.fr), in French; 1 carrefour de Longchamp, 75116).

Any one who would like to help in the ‘reforestation’ of the capital and doesn’t mind parting with €5 should visit **1 Parisien, 1 Arbre** (1 Parisien, 1 Tree; [www.1parisien1arbre.com](http://www.1parisien1arbre.com), in French).

In theory, Parisians can be fined up to €183 for littering (that includes cigarette butts), but we’ve never heard of anyone having to pay. Smoking has been prohibited in all closed public areas – from train and metro stations to restaurants, bar and cafés – since 2008.

Don’t be annoyed if you see locals drop paper wrappings or other detritus along the side of the pavement, however; it will be swept away by those ubiquitous street sweepers. In fact, Parisians are encouraged to use the gutters for litter if bins are not available.

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