

## A Beginner's Guide to Paris – What to See, Do, and Wear!

There are many things in this life that are overrated. Justin Bieber, a full English Breakfast, and BuzzFeed videos are a few that come to mind immediately. But pop stars and strange food combinations aside, popular travel locales can also veer into violently overhyped territory.

While London is wonderful, the giant expensive Ferris wheel, commonly known as the London Eye, is not worth the time, money or threat of vertigo. And while it may be known as the happiest place on earth, for anyone over the age of 12, Disneyland Anaheim is more a festival of shrieking horrors and juvenile rides than a great way to spend a day off.

However, on the flip side, there are also some things, places and occasions that whose praises can never be sung too high. Fresh baked buttery croissants, the chic adorableness of Audrey Tautou, and the elegance and beauty of the most amazing city in the world—Paris, France!

For all of those who had the misfortune of being born outside of the City of Lights, we have probably dreamed of visiting one day. But with a city as big, storied and full of romanticism as Paris, it can be difficult to know where to start. Well, never fear, here are a few tips to help you navigate the city with ease.

### Summertime Love

Even for the French, Paris is a dream. And while many of us would welcome an opportunity to visit the city at any time, the French know that the best time to visit Paris is when everyone else has left it—during the summer.

Summer is the ideal time to vacation, and Parisians are no different on this account. During July and August, many of them love to head to the Riviera. And while they are heading out, you can head in and enjoy a few days off playing temporary Parisian.

The biggest upsides to this are that with less people, the city will be relatively quieter. And with more elbow room and less hectic energy, the remaining Parisians are often friendlier and more relaxed. And who knows, with this new adopted attitude, they may even be more open to making a foreign friend or two. If you play your cards right, that person could be you.

### Montmartre

Now, that you know when to visit Paris, now it is time to talk about where to stay while you are there. One could argue that there are no bad places to stay in Paris. And while that may be true, there are better, read more affordable, places to stay in the city. And chief among them is Montmartre.

As the district has spent many years outside of the official city limits, it is no surprise then that it has been an epicenter for outsiders to gather as they began to stake their claims in the world. From Picasso, to Langston Hughes to Degas, this hill and the surrounding area that has been given its name, has inspired artists that have changed the world; quite literally. So, what better place to stay in Paris than where you can walk in the footsteps of some of the most influential artists in history?

## These Louboutins Were Made for Walking

Speaking of walking, unlike New York and other New World cities that are best viewed via the best way to see Paris is not from the per view of a double decker tour bus. No, the best way to view Paris is via your own two feet. All of the most famous sites such as the Louvre, Opera house and Eiffel Tower are within (relatively close) walking distance from each other.

## Le Palais Garnier Opera de Paris

And one of your first stops should be Le Palais Garnier Opera de Paris. Whether you are a fan of Opera or not, a visit to Le Palais Garnier Opera de Paris should not be missed. The building itself boasts a beautiful blend of Napoleon, Baroque, and Palladio and Renaissance styles. If your knowledge of European architecture is a bit rusty, just know that both the façade and interior of the building are beautiful and well worth a look.

Fans of the book, movie and/or Broadway show and movie Phantom of the Opera will be happy to see the original inspiration for the theatrical set live in close in and in person. And if you happened to be *that* kind of former theater kid, keep in mind that no one will look at you strangely if you bring your own cape and face mask. Because, assuredly, even the Parisians have all done it once before—whether they'd admit it or not.

## The Louvre

Next, up be sure to make a stop at the Louvre. Is there anything to say about the most famous museum in the world that hasn't been said before? Well, there is only one way to know for sure, and that is to see it for yourself. But, here's a pro tip: dedicate an entire day to your visit. If you were thinking of taking a stroll around the city and then heading to the museum to observe some wonderful art—think again.

This former palace is like a city in of itself, with enough floor space to leave you feeling as though you have just run a few laps around the track. So, be sure to pack some water and/or a snack, because you will definitely need to keep your energy up as you journey from one end of the museum to another.

Now that you know how to manage around the museum, now let's talk about what to do while you are there. As the museum is home to some of the most famous artworks in history including the statue of Aphrodite, Liberty Leading the People, and, of course, the Mona Lisa. As there is so much to see, it is best to make a list prioritizing the works that you are most interested. This way you are certain not to miss out on any masterpieces that you didn't realize were there.

And speaking of masterpieces, it is impossible to go to the Louvre without visiting the Mona Lisa? This is obviously rhetorical because no one has ever done it. And if they had, they probably never say so out loud.

As a first time visiting her, you may come to realize that the portrait is actually significantly smaller than you anticipated. But you may be unsurprised to know is just how crowded that room can be. You may spend up to 30 minutes in a huddled mass slowly pushing yourself forward in order to get a view of her. So, be sure to allot enough time to not only get in front of her, but time enough to take it all in.

And before you leave the complex, be sure to have a stroll through the *Jardin des Tuileries*. In the French style of opulence, the gardens are just as beautiful as the palace and the artworks themselves. In some ways, it is the epitomal example of a French Garden.

## Sunset Cruise Down the Seine

After your day at the strolling either through the streets of gay Paris or the halls of the Louvre, you may want to take some time to sit and enjoy the view. And one of the best views of the city is from the waters that give it life—the Seine.

All along the banks of the river, there are boats offering cruises down her banks. While they are great at any time of the day, viewing the city at sunset will make it clear why the city is referred to as the city of lights. But keep in mind that even in the summer months, when the sun goes down, so does the temperature. So be sure to bring a jacket with you and perhaps even a scarf with you. It will be quite windy but worth it.

## Eiffel Tower

And at last the *pièce de résistance*, what many people travel over oceans, sand dunes and mountains to see—the Eiffel Tower. There is simply no building, bridge, radio tower more emblematic of a city than the Eiffel Tower. And we can definitively say, this tourist attraction is more than worth the hype.

Since construction was completed in 1889, it has served as a epitomal symbol of romanticism for all those who hearts never give up dreams of magic and whimsy. And much like the tour on the River Seine, the best time to climb the tower is after the sun has gone down, but the lights have turned on. And if you are lucky, you may just find yourself in the in the best seat in the city when the tower itself begins to sparkle. It is truly an experience that you will treasure for the rest of your life.

But to ensure that you'll actually get to experience it for yourself, be sure to book the tickets far in advance. And keep your jacket within reach. Even in the summertime, on the top of the tower the air can be rather fresh. But with the view and the lightshow, it will be one of the greatest breaths that you take in your life.

So, there you have it! A guide to the City of Lights that will show you that its reputation is well worth the hype. So, book your tickets, grab your scarf, and get ready to take flight! Paris is waiting for you.