

Destination Details – Visiting Paris



Things to do, places to eat, trips to make when visiting Paris

May 11, 2026

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Paris Travel Guide for River Cruise Guests

Paris is one of the world’s most iconic cities — blending grand boulevards, riverside cafés, historic monuments, incredible food, and charming neighborhoods into one unforgettable destination. For river cruise guests, Paris is especially rewarding because many embarkation ports and hotels are centrally located, making it easy to explore before or after your cruise.

Best Areas to Stay in Paris

Best Areas to Stay in Paris

— Where to Stay for Every Traveler —

1 SAINT-GERMAIN-DES-PRÉS

Best Overall for First-Time Visitors

- Classic Paris charm & central location
- Walkable to major sights & the Seine
- Great cafés, boutiques & hotels

Easy 🚶

2 LE MARAIS

Best for Charm & Food

- Historic streets & beautiful architecture
- Excellent dining, shopping & nightlife
- Perfect for boutique hotels & Airbnb

Easy 🚶

3 7TH ARRONDISSEMENT

Best for Eiffel Tower Views

- Elegant, quiet & luxurious
- Close to Eiffel Tower & Seine
- Ideal for couples & special stays

Easy 🚶

4 LATIN QUARTER (5TH)

Best Budget-Friendly & Central

- Lively student area with great cafés
- Walkable to Notre Dame & Saint-Germain
- Good value hotels & apartments

Moderate 🚶

5 MONTMARTRE (18TH)

Best Hidden Gem Neighborhood

- Village feel with artistic history
- Stunning views & romantic streets
- Charming cafés & local atmosphere

Moderate to Strenuous 🚶

Helpful Distances

- Eiffel Tower to Louvre: ~25 min (Walk)
- Notre Dame to Sacré-Coeur: ~35 min (Metro)
- Louvre to Montmartre: ~20 min (Metro)
- Eiffel Tower to Le Marais: ~30 min (Walk)

River Cruise Ports (Embarkation/Disembarkation)

- 📍 Port de Grenelle (15th)
- 📍 Port de Javel (15th)
- 📍 Port de la Bourdonnais (7th)

(Locations may vary by cruise line)

Saint-Germain-des-Prés — Best Overall for First-Time Visitors

- Classic Parisian atmosphere
 - Excellent cafés and walkability
 - Easy access to the Seine and major sights
 - Ideal for luxury hotels and boutique stays
 - Activity Level: **Easy**
-

Le Marais — Best for Charm & Food

- Historic streets and hidden courtyards
 - Excellent shopping and dining
 - Great boutique hotel and Airbnb area
 - One of Paris' most walkable neighborhoods
 - Activity Level: **Easy**
-

7th Arrondissement — Best for Eiffel Tower Views

- Elegant and quieter atmosphere
 - Excellent luxury hotels
 - Close to the Eiffel Tower and Seine
 - Ideal for couples and river cruise guests
 - Activity Level: **Easy**
-

Latin Quarter — Best Budget-Friendly Central Area

- Lively cafés and student atmosphere
- Walkable to Notre Dame and Saint-Germain
- Great value hotels and apartments
- Activity Level: **Moderate**

☀️ Montmartre — Best Hidden Gem Neighborhood

- Village feel above the city
 - Incredible views and artistic history
 - Romantic cafés and hidden alleys
 - Activity Level: **Moderate to Strenuous** (hills)
-

Top-Rated Hotels

The Ritz Paris

Legendary luxury overlooking Place Vendôme with historic elegance and world-class service.

Perfect For:

- Luxury pre/post cruise stays
 - Special occasions
 - First-time Paris visitors
-

Hôtel Plaza Athénée

Famous for Eiffel Tower views, glamorous décor, and exceptional dining.

Perfect For:

- Romantic stays
 - Luxury travelers
 - Fashion-focused visitors
-

Le Meurice

Classic Parisian palace hotel with Michelin-star dining and exceptional central access.

Perfect For:

- Art lovers
 - High-end travelers
 - Walkability
-

Hôtel d'Aubusson

Beautiful boutique luxury hotel in Saint-Germain with jazz evenings and old Paris charm.

Perfect For:

- Boutique hotel lovers
 - Couples
 - Quiet luxury
-

Hidden Gem Hotels

Hôtel Monge

Stylish boutique property in the Latin Quarter with an intimate local atmosphere.

Maison Proust

Beautiful literary-inspired luxury boutique hotel hidden in Le Marais.

Relais Christine

A peaceful hidden gem tucked into Saint-Germain with a private courtyard feel.

Hôtel des Grands Boulevards

Trendy boutique hotel with one of Paris' best rooftop dining spaces.

Top-Rated Restaurants

Le Train Bleu

Magnificent historic restaurant inside Gare de Lyon station with ornate Belle Époque interiors.

Perfect For:

- Arrival/departure meals
 - Traditional French cuisine
 - Historic dining atmosphere
-

Bouillon Chartier

Classic Parisian dining experience known for affordable traditional French dishes.

Perfect For:

- First-time Paris visitors
 - Historic atmosphere
 - Budget-friendly dining
-

Les Ombres

One of Paris' best Eiffel Tower view restaurants.

Perfect For:

- Sunset dinner
 - Romantic dining
 - Special occasions
-

Septime

Modern Michelin-starred dining with creative French cuisine.

Perfect For:

- Food lovers
 - Reservations well in advance
 - Contemporary dining
-

Hidden Gem Restaurants

Clamato

Outstanding seafood-focused restaurant loved by locals.

Chez Janou

Charming Provençal restaurant hidden in Le Marais with legendary chocolate mousse.

Au Vieux Paris d'Arcole

Tiny flower-covered hidden restaurant near Notre Dame.

Pink Mamma

Instagram-famous multi-level Italian restaurant with beautiful interiors and rooftop spaces.

The Café Life – Paris at its Finest

Paris may be the greatest café culture city in the world. Some of the best experiences aren't major attractions at all — they're simply lingering over coffee, wine, or pastries while watching Parisian life unfold around you.

Personal Experience! One my favorite pastimes while visiting Paris is ordering escargot and a loaf of fresh French bread while sitting outside at a café and enjoying the scenery.

Regardless of where I decide to take a break, it's always great to see the heartbeat of Paris, its people, going about their day in one of the most beautiful cities in the world. This is the one constant experience I make sure I do on every visit!



Relaxing over a drink or meal while watching the world pass by is part of the Parisian — and overall European — lifestyle. Slow down, linger a little longer, and enjoy the simple pleasure of connecting with the atmosphere, the city, and the people around you.

Saint-Germain-des-Prés — Best Overall Café Atmosphere

Saint-Germain-des-Prés

Classic Paris café culture at its finest.

Why It's Perfect:

- Elegant sidewalks
- Historic literary cafés
- Stylish locals and visitors
- Beautiful architecture and boutique shopping

Best For:

- Morning espresso
- Afternoon wine
- Long relaxed evenings

Famous Café Areas:

- Boulevard Saint-Germain
- Rue Bonaparte
- Place Saint-Sulpice

Le Marais — Best Trendy & Local Scene

Le Marais

One of the liveliest and most fashionable neighborhoods in Paris.

Why It's Great:

- Mix of locals and visitors
- Excellent café terraces
- Street performers and boutique shopping
- Younger, energetic atmosphere

Best Café Streets:

- Rue Vieille du Temple
- Rue des Rosiers
- Place des Vosges

Best Time:

- Late afternoon into evening
-

Trocadéro & Eiffel Tower Area — Best Scenic Views

Trocadéro

Perfect for iconic Paris scenery and tourist watching.

Why Visit:

- Eiffel Tower views
- Street musicians and performers
- Excellent sunset atmosphere

Best For:

- Champagne or wine at sunset
- Photography
- First-time visitors

Luxembourg Gardens — Best Relaxed Parisian Atmosphere

Luxembourg Gardens

One of the most peaceful and elegant places in Paris.

Why It's Special:

- Garden chairs and fountains
- Locals reading and relaxing
- Quiet café terraces nearby

Perfect For:

- Morning coffee
 - Pastries and reading
 - Slower pace afternoons
-

Montmartre — Best Romantic Café Setting

Montmartre

Artistic hillside neighborhood filled with hidden cafés and village charm.

Why It's Amazing:

- Cobblestone streets
- Street artists and musicians
- Incredible atmosphere at night

Best Café Areas:

- Place du Tertre
- Rue de l'Abreuvoir
- Near Sacré-Cœur side streets

Best Time:

- Early evening

Activity Level: **Moderate** (hills)

Seine Riverbanks — Best Scenic Relaxed Vibe

Seine River

The riverbanks are filled with cafés, wine bars, and floating terraces.

Why Visit:

- Boats passing by
- Sunset reflections
- Romantic atmosphere

Best Areas:

- Near Pont Alexandre III
 - Île Saint-Louis
 - Left Bank near Musée d'Orsay
-

Canal Saint-Martin — Best Hidden Local Scene

Canal Saint-Martin

Less touristy and more local-feeling.

Why It's Great:

- Young Parisian crowd
- Relaxed canalside cafés
- Excellent bakery culture

Best For:

- Casual mornings
 - Wine and charcuterie
 - Hidden gem atmosphere
-

Place des Vosges — Best Elegant Courtyard Atmosphere

Place des Vosges

One of Paris' most beautiful squares.

Why It's Perfect:

- Arcaded cafés
- Beautiful architecture
- Sophisticated atmosphere

Excellent For:

- Quiet afternoon coffee
 - Reading
 - Relaxed people watching
-

Most Iconic Paris Café Experience

Café de Flore & Les Deux Magots

Located in Saint-Germain, these legendary cafés were once frequented by:

- Hemingway
- Picasso
- Sartre
- Simone de Beauvoir

Why Go:

- Historic atmosphere
- Excellent terrace seating
- Classic Parisian experience

Tip:

You're paying partly for the experience and location — but it's worth doing at least once.

Best Café Areas for River Cruise Guests

If staying near river cruise embarkation areas, prioritize:

- Saint-Germain-des-Prés
- Eiffel Tower / 7th Arrondissement
- Le Marais
- Seine riverbanks near Musée d'Orsay

These combine:

- walkability
- sightseeing
- excellent cafés
- easy transportation access

The true magic of Paris often happens at a tiny café table with a coffee, wine glass, or pastry while simply watching the city move around you.

Most Popular Sights to See

Eiffel Tower

The city's most iconic landmark.

Best Ticket Tip:

Book summit tickets weeks in advance online.

Activity Level: **Moderate**

Louvre Museum

Home to the Mona Lisa and some of the world's greatest art collections.

Best Strategy:

Reserve timed-entry tickets early morning or late afternoon.

Activity Level: **Moderate**

Notre Dame Cathedral

Even after restoration, it remains one of Paris' most breathtaking landmarks.

Activity Level: **Easy**

Seine River Cruise

One of the best ways to experience Paris, especially at sunset or night.

Activity Level: **Easy**

Luxembourg Gardens

Beautiful formal gardens ideal for relaxing between sightseeing stops.

Activity Level: **Easy**

Hidden Gem Sights Most Visitors Miss

Musée Jacquemart-André

Elegant mansion museum with incredible interiors and fewer crowds.

Activity Level: **Easy**

Coulée Verte René-Dumont

An elevated park walkway that inspired New York's High Line.

Activity Level: **Easy**

Sainte-Chapelle

Often overshadowed by Notre Dame, but its stained-glass windows are extraordinary.

Activity Level: **Easy**

Canal Saint-Martin

Local-feeling canalside neighborhood full of cafés and hidden wine bars.

Activity Level: **Easy**

Père Lachaise Cemetery

Historic cemetery with beautiful pathways and famous graves.

Activity Level: **Moderate**

Musée d'Orsay — Paris' Most Beautiful Art Museum

Located along the Left Bank of the Seine inside a stunning former Beaux-Arts railway station, the Musée d'Orsay is widely considered one of the best museums in the world for Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art. For many visitors, it is actually more enjoyable and manageable than the Louvre thanks to its more focused collections, spectacular architecture, and easier navigation.

Personal Experience! This is my favorite museum in Paris. After spending hours touring the Louvre, which is wonderful, I found myself relaxing and unwinding while strolling through Musée d'Orsay. Seeing the world through the eyes and artistry of some of the most famous artists in the world really connected me with all that is good in our world. I even brought home a replica statue to display that has been displayed in my house for many years!

Why Visit Musée d'Orsay?

The museum is famous for housing masterpieces from:

- Monet
- Van Gogh
- Renoir
- Degas
- Cézanne
- Manet

- Gauguin

Highlights include:

- Van Gogh self-portraits
- Monet water lilies
- Degas ballerinas
- Renoir masterpieces
- The iconic giant station clock overlooking Paris

The building itself is part of the experience. Originally built as the Gare d'Orsay railway station for the 1900 World's Fair, the soaring glass ceilings and grand central hall make the museum feel dramatically different from traditional museums.

Best Things to See Inside

Impressionist Galleries (Level 5)

The absolute highlight for most visitors.

This upper floor contains many of the museum's most famous paintings and excellent natural lighting.

Must-See Artists:

- Claude Monet
 - Pierre-Auguste Renoir
 - Edgar Degas
 - Camille Pissarro
-

Van Gogh Collection

One of the best Van Gogh collections anywhere in Europe outside Amsterdam.

Highlights:

- *Starry Night Over the Rhône*
 - Self Portraits
 - Bedroom studies and landscapes
-

The Giant Clock Windows

The massive clock faces overlooking the Seine and Paris rooftops are one of the museum's hidden gems.

Perfect For:

- Photography
 - Scenic breaks
 - Quiet moments between galleries
-

Sculpture Hall

The central nave contains dramatic sculptures beneath the former station roof.

Why It's Special:

- Incredible architecture
 - Great resting point
 - Often less crowded than painting galleries
-

Best Ticket Tips

Reserve Timed Entry Tickets in Advance

Especially important during:

- Summer
- Holidays
- River cruise season

Midweek mornings are usually the least crowded.

Best Strategy

- Arrive early morning OR late afternoon
- Allow 2–4 hours
- Pair with a Seine riverside walk afterward

Best Way to Get There

Metro & RER

Closest stations:

- Solférino (Metro Line 12)
- Musée d'Orsay (RER C)

The museum is extremely easy to combine with:

- Louvre
 - Saint-Germain-des-Prés
 - Seine cruises
 - Tuileries Garden
-

Nearby Hidden Gem Experiences

Riverside Walks

The Seine promenade outside the museum is one of Paris' best walking areas.

Café Campana

The museum café designed by the Campana Brothers is a hidden gem itself with elegant décor and clock-window views.

Combine With:

- Saint-Germain café stops
 - Pont Alexandre III
 - Seine sunset cruise
 - Tuileries Garden
-

Why River Cruise Guests Love Musée d'Orsay

The museum is especially ideal for river cruise travelers because:

- It's centrally located near Seine embarkation areas
- Easier to navigate than the Louvre
- Excellent rainy-day activity
- Can comfortably fit into a half-day schedule
- Works well for both art lovers and casual visitors

Many river cruise guests consider it the perfect “Paris museum experience” because it combines:

- world-famous art
- stunning architecture
- manageable size
- beautiful riverfront location

🌟 Pro Tip

If choosing between the Louvre and Musée d'Orsay with limited time:

- Choose the **Louvre** for iconic masterpieces and grand scale
- Choose **Musée d'Orsay** for atmosphere, Impressionist art, and a more relaxed experience

For many travelers, Musée d'Orsay becomes their favorite museum in Paris.

Best Transportation Around Paris

Metro — Best Overall

- Fast and inexpensive
- Excellent citywide coverage
- Best option for independent travelers

Activity Level: **Easy**

Walking

Paris is one of the world's best walking cities.

Best Areas:

- Saint-Germain
- Le Marais
- Seine riverbanks

Activity Level: **Moderate**

Uber & Taxi

Useful late at night or with luggage.

Batobus (River Shuttle)

Hop-on hop-off river transportation along the Seine.

Perfect For:

- Relaxed sightseeing
- Scenic transportation
- River cruise extensions

Activity Level: **Easy**

River Cruise Port Tips

River cruise docks may be located:

- Near the Eiffel Tower
- Port de Grenelle
- Port de Javel
- Port de la Bourdonnais

Tips:

- Confirm embarkation location carefully
 - Traffic can be significant during peak times
 - Metro access is excellent from most dock areas
 - Private transfers help with luggage-heavy arrivals
-

Best Day Trips from Paris

Versailles

One of Europe's grandest palaces with magnificent gardens.

Best Transportation:

RER train or guided tour

Activity Level: **Moderate**

Champagne Region (Reims & Épernay)

Perfect for wine lovers and river cruise extensions.

Best Transportation:

High-speed train or guided tour

Activity Level: **Easy**

Giverny

Monet's home and gardens are spectacular during spring and summer.

Best Transportation:

Train + shuttle or guided tour

Activity Level: **Easy**

Normandy

Historic beaches, charming towns, and WWII history.

Best Transportation:

Guided day tour or rental car

Activity Level: **Moderate**

Loire Valley Castles

Beautiful château region ideal for longer stays.

Best Transportation:

Train tours or rental car

Activity Level: **Moderate**

Best Ways to Book Attractions & Tours

Skip-the-Line Tickets

Highly recommended for:

- Eiffel Tower
 - Louvre
 - Versailles
 - Sainte-Chapelle
-

Food Tours in Paris

One of the best ways to experience Paris is through its food. From flaky croissants and artisan cheeses to wine, chocolate, pastries, and hidden local cafés, food tours offer a fantastic introduction to both Parisian cuisine and neighborhood culture. They are especially popular with river cruise guests because they combine sightseeing, local history, and multiple tastings into one relaxed experience.

LE MARAIS Paris Food Tour

A DELICIOUS WALK THROUGH HISTORY, FLAVOR & LOCAL CULTURE

DURATION: ~3 HOURS

DISTANCE: ~2.5 MILES (4 KM)

DIFFICULTY: EASY

BEST TIME: LATE MORNING TO EARLY AFTERNOON

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ 10 Delicious Food Stops
- ✓ Historic Streets & Hidden Courtyards
- ✓ Local Specialty Shops
- ✓ Café & Market Experience
- ✓ Perfect for First-Time Visitors

TIPS FOR YOUR TOUR

- Come hungry – portions are generous!
- Wear comfortable shoes.
- Water is optional; bring a bottle.
- Tours run rain or shine.
- Many shops are closed on Mondays.

Legend:

- Walking Route (Recommended Path)
- 1 Food Stop
- 📷 Great Photo Spot
- 🌳 Scenic / Hidden Gem
- ♿ Public Restrooms

START

1 Place des Vosges
Begin your tour in one of Paris' most beautiful squares.
Try a buttery croissant or pain au chocolat.

2 Maison Plisson
Iconic gourmet shop for a taste of French terroir.
Try: French cheese or cured sausage.

3 Stohrer Pâtisserie
Paris' oldest pastry shop (1730) – a true classic.
Try: Baba au rhum or a fruit tart.

4 La Maison du Chocolat
Indulge in some of the world's best chocolate.
Try: Signature chocolate ganache.

5 L'As du Falafel
World-famous falafel in the heart of Le Marais.
Try: Falafel sandwich.

6 Marché des Enfants Rouges (Oldest Market)
Vibrant covered market with diverse flavors.
Try: Seasonal bites & fresh juices.

7 Breizh Café
Cozy spot for authentic French crêpes.
Try: Crêpe with butter & salted caramel.

8 Berthillon
Legendary ice cream loved by locals.
Try: Pistachio or chocolate sorbet.

9 Café Pause
Classic French café for a relaxing break.
Try: Café au lait & a madeleine.

10 Chambelland Boulangerie
Award-winning bakery and perfect way to end your tour.
Try: A fresh baguette or flaky pastry.

FINISH
You're just a short walk to Place de la Bastille or the Seine River!

AT A GLANCE

- 1 Place des Vosges
Croissant or pastry
- 2 Maison Plisson
Cheese or charcuterie
- 3 Stohrer Pâtisserie
Baba au rhum or tart
- 4 La Maison du Chocolat
Chocolate tasting
- 5 L'As du Falafel
Falafel sandwich
- 6 Marché des Enfants Rouges
Market bites & juice
- 7 Breizh Café
Crêpe
- 8 Berthillon
Ice cream or sorbet
- 9 Café Pause
Café & madeleine
- 10 Chambelland Boulangerie
Baguette or pastry

NEARBY ADD-ONS

- 🏛️ Picasso Museum (5 min walk)
- 🌳 Seine River Walk (5 min walk)
- 🗼 Place de la Bastille (10 min walk)
- 🛍️ Shopping on Rue des Rosiers

Bon appétit et bonne balade!

📍 Recommended Food Tour Areas

- **Le Marais** — Excellent for pastries, falafel, chocolate, wine, and trendy food shops
- **Saint-Germain-des-Prés** — Classic Paris cafés, bakeries, cheeses, and wine tastings
- **Montmartre** — Charming village atmosphere with bakeries, crêpes, and local markets
- **Latin Quarter** — Great mix of traditional French foods and hidden local favorites

★ Popular Tour Options

- **Secret Food Tours Paris** — Well-rated small-group tours with generous tastings and local guides
- **Paris by Mouth** — Premium food and wine experiences focused on authentic Parisian cuisine
- **Devour Tours Paris** — Excellent storytelling and neighborhood-focused experiences
- **Airbnb Experiences** — Great for smaller, more personal tours with local hosts

Tips for Booking

- Book early during peak cruise season
- Evening tours are excellent for wine and atmosphere
- Come hungry — portions are usually generous
- Walking tours are typically easy to moderate activity levels

A food tour is often one of the most memorable experiences in Paris, offering the chance to discover hidden streets, local specialties, and authentic Parisian culture beyond the major tourist attractions.

Suggested Activity for River Cruise Guests

1 Night

- Eiffel Tower
 - Seine dinner cruise
 - Saint-Germain walk
-

2–3 Nights

Add:

- Louvre
 - Montmartre
 - Le Marais
 - Hidden museums
-

4+ Nights

Add:

- Versailles
- Champagne

- Normandy
 - Loire Valley
-

Most Underrated Paris Experience

Simply Wandering the Neighborhoods

Some of Paris' best moments happen without a strict itinerary:

- café hopping
- riverside walks
- hidden courtyards
- local bakeries
- sunset along the Seine

The magic of Paris is often found between the major landmarks.

Map of Paris Area Sights to See

Paris Attractions Map

— Top Sights & Hidden Gems —

Must-See Attractions

- 1 Eiffel Tower
- 2 Louvre Museum
- 3 Notre Dame Cathedral
- 4 Arc de Triomphe
- 5 Champs-Élysées
- 6 Musée d'Orsay
- 7 Sacré-Cœur Basilica
- 8 Palace of Versailles (Day Trip)

Hidden Gems

- 9 Musée de l'Orangerie
- 10 Sainte-Chapelle
- 11 Le Marais Hidden Streets
- 12 Canal Saint-Martin
- 13 Promenade Plantée (Coulée Verte)
- 14 Musée Jacquemart-André
- 15 Père Lachaise Cemetery
- 16 Parc des Buttes-Chaumont

Local Experiences

- 17 Saint-Germain-des-Près Cafés
- 18 Latin Quarter
- 19 Montmartre Streets
- 20 Place des Vosges
- 21 Luxembourg Gardens
- 22 Seine River Cruise

Helpful Distances

- Eiffel Tower to Louvre: ~25 min (Walk)
- Louvre to Notre Dame: ~20 min (Walk)
- Notre Dame to Sacré-Cœur: ~40 min (Metro)
- Louvre to Versailles: ~45 min (RER)

M Metro Station
RER Train Station (RER)
SR River Cruise Pier

