

Paris, France



Airport: Paris Roissy-Charles De Gaulle (CDG)

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Airport: Paris-Orly (ORY)

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City Statistics



Location: Ile-de-France region, France.

Dialling code: 33.

Time zone: GMT + 1 (GMT + 2 from last Sunday in March to Saturday before last Sunday in October).

Electricity: 220 volts AC, 50Hz; round two-pin plugs are standard.

Average January temperatures: 4°C (39°F).

Average July temperatures: 19.5°C (67°F).

Annual rainfall: 642mm (25 inches).

Overview



Paris is the city of a thousand clichés - the 'City of Lights', and Hemingway's much quoted 'Moveable Feast' amongst them, but for once it is also a city that justifies the hype. The French capital is one of the world's truly great cities, a metropolis that lavishly satisfies the desires of tourists and business people alike and manages to retain a standard of living that makes becoming a Parisian so alluring.

The city dramatically wears its history on its sleeve, and today it is still centred around the Ile de la Cité, where over 2,000 years ago Celtic tribes first eked out a living. The Romans were later drawn to this strategic location in the middle of the Seine, a natural crossroads between Germany and Spain, and took control in 52BC. Despite English rule between 1420 and 1436, a series of French kings brought about the centralisation of France, with Paris at its cultural, political and economic heart.

Despite its large size and population, almost everything worth seeing is contained within the Boulevard Périphérique (the ring road). The compact centre is easily navigable on foot, with the efficient and comprehensive Métro system always on hand to ease tired limbs. The lifeblood River Seine splits the city neatly in two and the useful arrondissements (districts) system neatly carves Paris into manageable chunks.

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The history of Paris can be uncovered throughout its distinctive districts. Hilly Montmartre, with its village atmosphere, was where the Paris Commune began in 1871; the Marais evokes medieval Paris, its winding streets a sharp contrast to the wide, orderly Haussmann boulevards, envisaged by Napoleon III to keep the mobs at bay.

These grand 19th-century avenues still dominate the city, interspersed with modern flourishes. The *grands travaux* (large projects) of Président Mitterrand added the Grande Arche de la Défense, the ultra-modern Opéra de la Bastille, the impressive Institut du Monde Arabe, and plonked a glass pyramid in the central courtyard of the Louvre.

The best time to visit the city is, of course, during the famous Paris spring between April and June, when the days are sunny but not too hot. The autumn and winter months are another good time to come when there are smaller crowds and snow is a rarity, but there really is no bad time to visit one of the world's truly great cities.

Getting There By Air



Aéroports de Paris (ADP) (www.adp.fr) is responsible for the two major airports in Paris: Roissy-Charles de Gaulle and Orly.

Roissy-Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG)

Tel: 3950.

Website: www.adp.fr

The city's main airport is located 23km (14 miles) northeast of the city. There are three terminals: CDG 1 serves international flights; CDG 2 serves national and international flights; and T9 has charter flights only (national and international). CDG 1 and CDG 2 are linked by free shuttle buses. *Air France* coaches and *RER* line B (see below) link Charles de Gaulle airport to Orly airport (journey time - 50 minutes).

Airport facilities: Facilities include bars, restaurants and boutiques, post offices, newsagents, chemists, banks, ATMs, bureaux de change, Wi-Fi, insurance facilities and car parks. There is no left-luggage facility. Car hire companies at the airport include *Avis*, *Budget*, *Europcar*, *Hertz*, *National Citer* and *Sixt*.

Business facilities: Fully equipped meeting rooms, offices and a VIP lounge are located within the recently revamped *Roissy Charles de Gaulle 1 Business Centre* (tel: (01) 4862 2290), accessible from the departures level near gate 34, by taking the escalators to the shopping level.

Transport to the city: The *RER* line B (tel: 3246; www.ratp.info) runs frequently throughout the day, departing from the TGV station of CDG 2 to the Gare du Nord, Châtelet-Les Halles, St-Michel and Denfert-Rochereau, where there are métro stations (journey time - 30-45 minutes). Two bus services with *SNCF bus de nuit* (tel: 0810 020 202), run from the airport to the city centre when the train line is closed. One service takes passengers to Gare du Nord and Châtelet, the other to Gare du Nord, Châtelet, Gare de Lyon and Gare d'Austerlitz (journey time - 45-60 minutes).

The *Roissybus* service operated by *RAPT* (tel: 3246; www.ratp.info) departs from the three terminals to rue Scribe, métro Opéra (journey time - about 60 minutes). The service operates daily 0600-2300. *RAPT* bus services 350 to Gare de l'Est and 351 to Nation also serve Terminals 1 and 2.

Air France coaches (tel: 0892 350 820) depart every 15 minutes from CDG 1 and CDG 2 - running daily to Place Charles de Gaulle (journey time - 40 minutes). Buses also depart daily 0700-2100 to Paris-Montparnasse, rue du Commandant Mouchotte, Gare de Lyon and boulevard Diderot (journey time - 50 minutes).

The *Blue Shuttle* (tel: (01) 3011 1300; www.bluvan.fr) is a door-to-door airport minibus service that is often cheaper than a taxi. Places must be reserved at least two days in advance (journey time - 1 hour 15 minutes). Ticket prices vary according to the number of passengers and the time of booking, the cheapest rate is only available if booked at least three weeks ahead.

A taxi to the city centre costs around €50. (journey time - 45-60 minutes).



Paris-Orly Airport (ORY)

Tel: 3950.

Website: www.adp.fr

Orly is located 14km (9 miles) south of the city, on the A6 motorway. There are two terminals linked by *navette* (shuttle). Orly Sud handles mainly international flights, while Orly Ouest handles mainly domestic flights.

Airport facilities: These include bars, restaurants, Wi-Fi, boutiques, banks, foreign exchange, dry cleaners, supermarket, pharmacy, post office and a hairdresser. There is no left-luggage facility. Car hire companies at the airport include *Avis*, *Budget*, *Europcar*, *Hertz*, *National Citer* and *Sixt*.

Business facilities: The fully equipped *Orly West Business Centre* (tel: (01) 4975 1233) has several meeting rooms, offices and a VIP business lounge in the west terminal. Access is from the departure level, by an escalator located at the entrance to hall three.

Transport to the city: A combination service of *RER* line C (tel: 3246; www.ratp.info) and the ADP *navette* (shuttle bus) departs from both terminals and stops at the Gare d'Austerlitz, St-Michel, Invalides and Porte Maillot (journey time - about 35 minutes). The service operates daily.

Orlyval (tel: 0836 687 714) is the Val train shuttle link to the *RER* line B station of Anthony, which has métro connections to Denfert-Rochereau, St-Michel and Châtelet-Les Halles (journey time - 30 minutes). Trains run regularly throughout the day.

Frequent *RATP* buses (tel: 3246; www.ratp.fr) stop at place Denfert-Rochereau. The 'Orlybus' runs to Denfert-Rochereau RER and métro station daily (journey time - 25 minutes). The 'Jetbus' runs to métro Villejuif-Louis Aragon (journey time - 15 minutes).

Air France coaches (tel: 0892 350 820; www.airfrance.com) operate daily, stopping at the Porte d'Orléans, Gare Montparnasse, Duroc and Gare des Invalides (journey time - around 30 minutes).

The *Blue Shuttle* (see *Roissy Charles de Gaulle Airport* above) runs into the city centre (journey time - 1 hour). Taxis from the airport to the centre of Paris also cost around €40-45 (journey time - 35 minutes).

Approximate flight times to Paris: From London is 1 hour 10 minutes; from New York is 7 hours; from Los Angeles is 10 hours 30 minutes; from Toronto is 7 hours and 20 minutes and from Sydney is 23 hours 25 minutes.

Getting Around



Public Transport: The *Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens (RATP)* (tel: 3246; www.ratp.fr) is an integrated, five-zone system of bus, métro and trains that is both cheap and efficient (except during strikes, which are frequent).

The 14 *métro* lines extend into zones one and two in central Paris. Métros operate daily 0530-0030, lines are colour-coded and designated by numbers. They are also clearly signposted with the names of the terminus station. The line 14 *métro* *Météor* runs from Gare St-Lazare to Bibliothèque François Mitterrand using modern driverless trains. Free transport maps are available at métro stations, bus terminals and the tourist office.

The *RER (Réseau Express Régional)* suburban express network has five lines (A, B, C, D and E) covering five zones and operating daily 0500-0110 with journey times generally much faster than the métro for distances covered. The system is linked to the métro network and some SNCF trains.

The bus system is easy to use. Bus routes are numbered and stops display the buses that stop there, while a map shows all the stops on the route and the bus times. Most buses run Monday to Saturday 0630-2100; some continue until 0130. Services are reduced by approximately half on Sundays and bank holidays. Night buses (*Noctambuses*) run on several routes, Monday to Saturday 0100-0530 hourly, with a reduced service on Sunday. The night bus service cuts between place du Châtelet by the Hôtel de Ville and the suburbs.

The same tickets are valid on the bus, métro and RER (within zones one and two only) but not night buses (see below). One ticket is sufficient for a single bus ride, for an RER journey (within zones one and two only)

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or a métro journey (irrespective of zone). One ticket allows for changes (*correspondances*) of lines on the RER and the métro, however, separate tickets are required for changes between buses or between bus and métro/RER. Tickets should be validated on entry and kept until the end of the journey to avoid on-the-spot fines. Tickets, carnets and passes are all available for purchase from stations and *tabacs*; only single tickets may be purchased from the bus driver.

Night buses require separate tickets, which allow one change. Weekly or monthly travel passes (see below) may also be used on night buses. A **mobilis** day pass is available for central Paris and for five zones including the airports. Paris Visites offer one, two, three and five-day visitors passes for Paris and its immediate suburbs (zones 1-3), which can include transport to the airports, Versailles and Disneyland Paris (zones 1-5). There are reduced prices for children. These are available for purchase at the airports, métro and RER stations and tourist offices.

For longer stays, the **Carte Orange**, with a weekly coupon (*coupon hebdomadaire*), for sale at all métro stations, provides good value. It allows a week of travel in zones one and two. There is also a monthly Carte Orange. Tickets covering more zones are also available. The Carte Orange reusable ticket should be validated at the métro turnstile and shown to the bus driver.

Taxis: Taxis can be hailed in the street or caught at taxi ranks (*arrêts taxis*) found at airports, stations and close to main road junctions. An available taxi can be difficult to find, especially when most in demand - Friday and Saturday nights. A yellow light displayed on the roof shows that the taxi is available for hire; an orange light shows the taxi is in use. Taxi ranks have telephones, so if there are no cars in the rank you can call one.

Tariff A applies during the day. Journeys after 1900, on Sundays, bank holidays and in the suburbs are more expensive (tariff B). The most expensive rate (tariff C) applies for the suburbs and airports at night and districts outside Paris during the day. There are additional charges for pick-up and various other situations, including extra passengers, luggage and waiting. Tipping is not compulsory but drivers expect around 10%.

Taxi numbers are displayed at the ranks and listed in the yellow pages. These include *Alpha Taxis* (tel: (01) 4585 8585; www.alphataxis.fr), *Taxis Bleus* (tel: 0891 701 010; www.taxis-bleus.com) and *Taxis G7* (tel: (01) 4739 4739; www.taxisg7.fr).

Driving in the City: Driving in central Paris is not advised. Most hotels do not have garages, parking is difficult (illegally parked cars are towed away) and traffic jams (*embouteillages*) are frequent. While the average speed in the métro is 27kph (17mph), the average road speed is 18kph (11mph) and even slower during the rush hours (Monday to Friday 0730-0900 and 1700-1900).

Parking prices vary throughout the city but are in the region of €2-5 an hour, for a maximum of two hours. Most legal street-side parking spaces are marked '*payant*'; coins of €0.20, €0.50 and €1 may be used for the pay-and-display parking machines (*horodateurs*). Paris also has numerous underground and covered car parks in the city centre, costing around €2.50 per hour or about €15 for periods of 12-24 hours. These include the Arc de Triomphe, place de la Concorde and near the Forum des Halles. Many municipal garages close at around 2300 and some are closed on Sunday. The only good news is that parking is usually free on weekends and on weekdays before 0900 and after 1900.

Car Hire: The minimum age for car hire varies from 21 to 25 years. Drivers must have held a national driving licence for at least one year. It is usually requested that the cost is paid for with the driver's credit card.

Major car hire companies include *Avis* (tel: (01) 4418 1054; www.avis.fr), *Budget* (tel: (01) 4587 08 23; www.budget.com), *Europcar* (tel: (01) 3044 9384; www.europcar.fr), *Hertz* (tel: (01) 3938 3000; www.hertz.fr), *National Citer* (tel: (01) 4438 6045; www.citer.fr), and *Sixt* (tel: (01) 4438 5552; www.sixt.fr).

Bicycle Hire: There are over 200km (125 miles) of cycle lanes in Paris. Various maps and cycling guides can be found in bookstores and at some cycle shops. Bicycle hire companies include *Paris à Vélo C'est Sympa*, 37 boulevard Bourdon, 4th (tel: (01) 4887 6001; www.parisvelosympa.com) and *Paris Vélo*, 4 rue du Fer-à-Moulin, 5th (tel: (01) 4337 5922; www.paris-velo-rent-a-bike.fr).

Vélib is Paris's city-wide bike hire service. The first half hour is free, with low charges thereafter. The 800 stands mean you are never more than 300m (1,000ft) away from picking up one of the 20,000 bikes (tel: (01) 3079 7930; www.velib.paris.fr).

Hotels



Hotels

Hotel prices generally include VAT and a room tax (*taxe de séjour*) of between €0.50 and €1.50 per person per night. This tax is sometimes added to the bill at the end of a visit and guests are advised to check whether it is included when making a reservation. Guests are also advised to tip porters €2 for each bag and chambermaids €2 per day.

The hotels below are grouped into four price categories:

\$\$\$\$ (over €300)

\$\$\$ (€200 to €300)

\$\$ (€100 to €200)

\$ (up to €100)

The prices quoted here are the lowest standard rates for a double room, including VAT and room tax but excluding breakfast, unless otherwise specified.

Luxury

Hyatt Vendome

This contemporary 168-room (36 suite) palace hotel enjoys a privileged position near some of France's most glamorous shops and Place Vendome. Legendary American talent Ed Tuttle was the creative brains behind the décor of perhaps the city's most stylish luxury hotel, which has been created out of five grand townhouses with perfectly executed use of marble and mahogany. The hotel also boasts one of the finest spas in the city, with a range of Western and Oriental treatments, as well as a hot tub and sauna. Other impressive touches include lavish breakfasts, oversized marble bathrooms and a year-round outdoor heated terrace ideal for those looking to enjoy an al fresco coffee. Business facilities include seven meetings rooms.

5 Rue de la Paix

Tel: (01) 5871 1234.

Website: www.hyatt.com

Price: \$\$\$\$

Ritz Paris

Situated on one of the smartest yet most intimate squares in Paris, close to the Louvre, the Ritz is the city's most celebrated hotel and is the very essence of luxury and discretion. The lobby gleams with marble, chandeliers and impressive floral arrangements from designer Djordje Varda, while the oriental carpets, soft to the touch, soak up the sound. There is a magnificent swimming pool and fitness room, as well as a recently revamped health spa. In the labyrinthine underbelly of the hotel lies the celebrated cookery school, where master chefs teach their tricks to international acolytes.

15 place Vendôme, 1st

Tel: (01) 4316 3030.

Website: www.ritzparis.com

Price: \$\$\$\$

Moderate



Appi Hotel

When you say the location could not get better, expect to get a few strange looks from Parisians as this budget hotel is right in the heart of the red light district. It also happens to be close to most of the main tourist attractions and a Metro stop. The en suite doubles may have the smallest bathrooms in the city, but the bedrooms are clean with some modern art to brighten things up and views out over the human zoo below.

158 rue Saint Denis

Website: www.appi-hotel-paris.federal-hotel.com/page_en_1.html

Price: \$

Hotel du Septième Art

A Hollywood theme runs through this fun and funky 22-room hotel designed with the film buff in mind and adorned with 1950s posters. The hotel is a popular media haunt in the Marais district, set in a 16th-century building. There are no mod cons, such as lifts or air conditioning, although there are original wooden beams throughout and all rooms have en-suite bathrooms.

20 rue Saint-Paul, 4th

Tel: (01) 4454 8500.

Website: www.paris-hotel-7art.com

Price: \$

Relais Lafayette

Just a short walk away from Gare du Nord, the 61-room Relais Lafayette could not be much better placed for *Eurostar* travellers. With RER and Metro connections from Gare du Nord, this unpretentious hotel makes an ideal base. It may be no-frills, but rooms are modern and spotlessly clean. Reception staff are friendly and helpful, dispensing maps to new arrivals, as well as information on tours. The lobby has a public access Internet terminal and Wi-Fi can be arranged in the rooms.

7 rue des Petits Hotels

Tel: (01) 4246 3300.

Website: www.lesrelaisdeparis.fr

Price: \$\$

Business Etiquette



A degree of Parisian aggression and plenty of persistence is necessary when attempting business in the capital. However, firmness, not rudeness, is in order. At the first meeting, non-French speakers should apologise for their lack of linguistic aptitude and respect the local formality, addressing colleagues with the appropriate *Madame*, *Monsieur*, *Professeur* or *Docteur* followed by the surname and a handshake. Business cards (preferably in French and English) should be presented. Small talk is an essential part of doing business, so it is wise to do a quick refresher on French politics and culture prior to the meeting and not to rush straight to talk of business. Smart, conservative dress is recommended.

Standard business hours are Monday to Friday 0830/0900-1800/1900. Lunches may last for two hours or more - it is best for one to schedule meetings at 1100 or 1500, unless for lunch itself. Business lunches, working dinners and breakfast meetings are common. There has, though, been a move in recent years away from boozy long lunches towards shorter less indulgent affairs. Whoever fixes the meeting is expected to settle the bill. Conducting business in August (during the Parisian exodus to the south) is to be avoided at all costs.

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Sightseeing



Sightseeing Overview: The city centre is actually surprisingly compact and the Métro system makes getting around fairly easy. A good way for first time arrivals to get an idea of how Paris fits together is to take a cruise on the **River Seine** or ascend the **Eiffel Tower** and take in a sweeping view of the city. With so much to see, time management is crucial and many people choose to concentrate on one or two of the *arrondissements* (districts).

The nostalgic should wander around the mansions of the **Marais district**, past the **Musée Carnavalet**, 23 rue de Sévigné, 3rd; **Hôtel de Sully**, 62 rue St-Antoine, 4th, and **Place des Vosges**, home to the **Maison de Victor Hugo**.

Those interested in modern art and design should opt for the **Centre Georges Pompidou**, place Beaubourg, 4th; Jean Nouvel's **Institut du Monde Arabe**, 1 rue des Fossés-St-Bernard, 5th; or the **Grande Arche de la Défense** with its high-speed glass lift offering a spectacular view of Paris.

The Grande Arche, which lies along the same geographical axis as Napoleon's **Arc de Triomphe** and the **Champs-Élysées**, was built a century and a half later. This incongruity (the modern city juxtaposed with the old) is all part of the charm of Paris.

Paris overflows with museums, ranging from the vast collections of the **Louvre** to the small and quirky - such as the **Musée des Arts Forains**, 53 avenue des-Terroires-de-France, 12th, a shrine to fairground art, with something for everyone scattered through the metropolitan area. The **Musée du Quai Branly**, 37 quai Branly, 7th, was opened to much fanfare in 2006 and has been an instant success.

Repeat visitors to Paris usually end up uncovering something new, such as the rejuvenated **Bercy district** to the east with its green spaces, popular bars and development buzz or **Belleville**, with its grungy cosmopolitanism and ethnic restaurants.

Another popular attraction is **Paris Plage** in summer when the car takes a back seat and the city's citizens relax by the Seine amidst a world of sand and deckchairs.

Tourist Information: Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau

25 rue des Pyramides

Tel: 0892 683 000.

Website: www.paris-touristoffice.com

Opening hours: (Jun-Oct) daily 0900-1900; (Nov-May) Mon-Sat 1100-1900, Sun 1000-1900.

Further tourist offices are located at the Gare de Lyon, 20 boulevard Diderot, 12th (open Mon to Sat 0800-1800), Gare du Nord, 18 rue de Dunkerque, 10th (open 0800-1800), Opera, 11 rue Scribe, 9th (open 0900-1830), Eiffel Tower (open daily 1100-1840 May to Sep).

Passes: The **Museum Pass** (www.museums-of-paris.com) allows free unlimited access to more than 70 museums and monuments in the Paris region, including the Arc de Triomphe, Musée National du Louvre, Musée d'Orsay and Musée Rodin. The two-, four- or six-day pass is for sale from tourist offices, participating museums and monuments, the main métro stations and FNAC stores. It allows visitors to bypass queues but does not provide free admission to special or temporary exhibitions.

Key Attractions



Tour Eiffel (Eiffel Tower)

The Eiffel Tower literally towers over the Champ de Mars in the smart 7th *arrondissement*. The top (third) floor offers a sweeping panorama of Paris. From directly underneath there is a fascinating view of the delicate ironwork constructed by Gustave Eiffel, who was commissioned to build the tower for the Exposition Universelle in 1889 - the centenary of the French Revolution. The Tour Eiffel is also home to a number of restaurants, which offer views of the city and sky high prices to match.

Champ de Mars, 7th

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Tel: (01) 4411 2323.

Website: www.tour-eiffel.fr

Opening hours: Daily 0930-2345 (Jan-mid Jun); daily 0900-0045 (mid Jun-Aug), daily 0930-0045 (Sep-Dec).
Admission charge.

Cathédrale de Notre-Dame (Cathedral of Our Lady)

The stocky Notre-Dame Cathedral, situated on the Ile-de-la-Cité, could not be more different from the filigree Eiffel Tower. Bishop Maurice de Sully began construction on the cathedral in 1163, to outshine the new abbey at St-Denis; work was completed in 1345. The result is a gothic masterpiece, with three stunning rose windows. Visitors should be prepared to climb the 387 spiral steps to the top of the 75m (246ft) north tower. The views over the River Seine and the city centre are well worth the effort. There is also a treasury with various liturgical objects on display.

6 Place du Parvis-Notre-Dame, 4th

Tel: (01) 4234 5610 or 4432 1672 (information on tower).

Website: www.cathedraledeparis.com

Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0800-1845, Sat-Sun (0800-1715) (cathedral); Apr, May, Sep daily 1000-1830, Jun-Aug Mon-Fri 1000-1830, Sat-Sun 1000-2300, Oct-Mar daily 1000-1730 (towers).

Free admission (cathedral); charge for towers and treasury.

La Basilique du Sacré-Coeur (The Sacred Heart Basilica)

A long, wide series of steps lead to the snowy-white domed Sacré-Coeur that dominates the arty district of Montmartre. A mishmash of styles, the Catholic church was built between 1870 and 1919, to fulfil a vow made during the Franco-Prussian war. The interior is splendid with neo-Byzantine mosaics and the domed tower offers a spectacular view over Paris. The crypt contains an interesting collection of religious relics and a slide show on the construction of the Basilica. Below the church, a park tumbles down the hillside in a flurry of benches that make an ideal spot for surveying the city skyline.

Parvis du Sacré-Coeur, 18th

Tel: (01) 5341 8900.

Website: www.sacre-coeur-montmartre.com

Opening hours: Daily 0600-2300 (Basilica); daily 0930-1830 (crypt and dome).

Free admission (Basilica); charge for dome and crypt.

Musée National du Louvre (Louvre National Museum)

The Louvre first opened to the public in 1793, following the Revolution, as a showcase for the art treasures of the kings of France. The museum is organised into three wings on four floors. The vast permanent collection includes Greek, Etruscan, Roman, Egyptian and East Asian antiquities, French, Spanish, Italian and northern European sculpture and 19th-century *objets d'art*. The painting collection is the strongest, with French, Italian, Dutch, German, Flemish and Spanish masterpieces from the mid-13th to the mid-19th centuries. Most famed French works include David's *Coronation of Napoléon*, Ingres' *The Turkish Bath*, Géricault's depiction of disaster, *The Raft of the Medusa* and Delacroix's ode to revolution, *Liberty Leading the People*. The museum's greatest treasure, Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, is in a bullet-proof case. There are plans to move it into its own room, but for now it is on display in room 13, on the first floor of the Denon wing. Buying tickets from the official website in advance saves unnecessary time spent queuing.

Cour Napoléon, 1st

Tel: (01) 4020 5050.

Website: www.louvre.fr

Opening hours: daily 0900-1800, Wed and Fri until 2130; closed Tues. Opening hours for temporary exhibitions vary.

Admission charge; free first Sun of each month; advance tickets can be purchased from branches of FNAC and on the Internet; tickets allow same-day re-admission.

Musée Rodin (Rodin Museum)

Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) lived and worked in this 18th-century *hôtel particulier*, now the Rodin Museum, and his sculptures populate the interior and gardens. Indoors, *The Kiss* portrays eternal passion frozen in white marble, while *The Hand of God* gives life to creamy white, half-formed figures. Works of Rodin's mistress and pupil, Camille Claudel, and paintings by Van Gogh, Monet, Renoir and Rodin himself are also on display. The gardens are graced by the monumental bronze *The Thinker*, whose godly physique contrasts sharply with the decrepitude of the writhing figures of *The Gates of Hell* and the controversial final portrait of Balzac, once described as 'a block that disgraces its author and French Art'.

77 rue de Varenne, 7th

Tel: (01) 4418 6110.

Website: www.musee-rodin.fr

Opening hours: Museum: Tues-Sun 0930-1745, garden: Tues-Sun 0930-1845 (Apr-Sep); museum: Tues-Sun 0930-1645, garden: Tues-Sun 0930-1700 (Oct-Mar).

Admission charge; free first Sun of each month.

Musée d'Orsay (Museum of Orsay)

The museum's home, an impressively converted railway station by the banks of the Seine, is stunning, but the real strength of this large museum lies in its collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art. The collection, covering the decisive 1848-1914 period, is arranged chronologically, beginning on the ground floor, jumping to the third, and then descending to the middle level. Among the most famous works are Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* (Luncheon on the Grass), rejected from the Salon of 1863, five of Monet's paintings of Rouen Cathedral and the realist work *L'Origine du Monde* (The Origin of the World), by Gustave Courbet, whose graphic depiction of the female sex continues to shock.

Entrances at 1 rue de la Légion d'Honneur and 1 rue de Bellechasse, 7th

Tel: (01) 4049 4814.

Website: www.musee-orsay.fr

Opening hours: Tues-Sun 0930-1800, Thurs 0930-2145.

Admission charge; free first Sun of each month.

Musée du Quai Branly

This grand relatively recently opened museum was a welcome to the Parisian cultural scene when it opened its doors during 2006 after much hype. The collections, which include a broad sweep of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas, have been lauded by critics and the public alike. Inside there are over 3,500 artefacts. From the main reception a ramp takes visitors off towards the eclectic collections, which include masks in Oceania, costumes from Asia and also African musical instruments and textiles.

17 Quai Branly, 7th

Tel: (01) 5661 7000.

Website: www.quaibrantly.fr

Opening hours: Tues-Sat 1000-1830, Thurs open to 2130.

Admission charge.

Centre Georges Pompidou (Georges Pompidou Centre)

Considered outrageous in 1977, the Pompidou Centre, designed by Piano and Rogers, has become part of the Parisian landscape, primary coloured tubes and all. The building was revamped and extended a few years ago, to cope with the huge numbers of people visiting its expanding collection of contemporary art and multimedia library.

Place Georges Pompidou, 4th

Tel: (01) 4478 1233.

Website: www.centrepompidou.fr

Opening hours: Wed-Mon 1100-2200; late-night openings until 2300 for some exhibits.



Admission charge; free first Sun of each month.

Paris Plage

Since its inception in 2001, Paris Plage has become a highly successful annual event. The idea of shutting off a busy 3.5km (2-mile) section of riverfront expressway in the city centre and turning it into a giant leisure oasis is both simple and brilliant, though it has provoked the ire of some of the city's taxi drivers. A flurry of deckchairs and hammocks replace the cars and even an open-air swimming pool, mainly geared towards children, features alongside the stalls selling food, drinks and ice cream. Mist sprays, sand and the sight of relaxing locals and tourists manage to raise a smile from all but the most world-weary of Parisians. Such has been the success of Paris Plage that, even when there is no sand, for the rest of the year sections of the river are now closed frequently at weekends to allow Parisians to cycle and walk along the riverside.

Banks of the Seine between Tuileries Tunnel and the Henri IV bridge

Opening times: Jul-Aug daily.

Free admission.

Musée National Picasso (National Picasso Museum)

Paris-based Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) owned most of this collection, one of the largest worldwide, housed in a 17th-century mansion in the Marais. All phases of his art are represented, with preparatory sketches and paintings covering the Blue Period, Rose Period, cubism, classicism, surrealism and sculptures ranging from a huge plaster head to a small cat. Memorable works include the Blue Period self-portrait *Paolo as Harlequin*, the surreal *Nude in an Armchair* and poignant paintings of Marie-Thérèse, his lover and muse. Photographs are displayed alongside the works they inspired, and African masks with Picasso's 'primitive' wood carvings. There is also a glimpse of the artist's personal taste in paintings, with his Matisse and Cézanne paintings displayed alongside his own.

Hôtel Salé, 5 rue de Thorigny, 3rd

Tel: (01) 4271 2521.

Website: www.musee-picasso.fr

Opening hours: currently closed for renovation. Reopens in February 2012.

Culture



Parisians are almost as passionate about their culture as they are about their restaurants. The French government takes art and culture very seriously, pumping money into the arts, supporting French cinema against Hollywood imports, and embarking on extravagant *grands travaux* (large projects), such as the **Bibliothèque Nationale de France**, quai François-Mauriac (tel: (01) 5379 5959; www.bnf.fr). The **Opéra Bastille** (see *Music* below) opened in 1989, on the bicentennial of Bastille Day, although the merit of its architecture and the quality of its productions have since been questioned.

Major venues, in addition to those detailed below, include the **Palais des Congrès**, 2 place de la Porte-Maillot, 17th (tel: (01) 4068 0005; www.palaisdescongres-paris.com), for opera, ballet and pop-star performances, and the enormous **Palais des Sports**, Porte de Versailles, 15th (tel: (01) 4828 4010; www.palaisdessports.com).

Tickets for concerts of all kinds can be purchased at *FNAC Forum des Halles*, 1 rue Pierre Lescot, 1st (tel: (01) 4041 4000; www.fnac.com), or *FNAC Musique*, 2 rue Charenton, 12th (tel: (01) 4342 0404). There is also the *Carrousel du Louvre*, 99 rue de Rivoli, 1st (tel: (01) 4316 4747 or 7272 1700; www.carrouseldulouvre.fr), located directly beneath the Louvre, or *Virgin Megastore*, 52 avenue des Champs-Élysées, 8th (tel: (01) 4953 5000; www.virginmega.fr). How ever long the queue, ticket touts at the Opéra and concert venues are to be avoided due to high prices and the prevalence of worthless fake tickets.

Music: The **Paris Opéra** (tel: 0892 899 090; www.opera-de-paris.fr) performs ballet and opera at the **Opéra Garnier**, place de l'Opéra, 9th, and **Opéra Bastille**, place de la Bastille, 12th. Large opera productions are also performed at the **Châtelet Théâtre Musical de Paris**, 1 place du Châtelet, 1st (tel: (01) 4028 2840; www.chatelet-theatre.com). The varied programme at the **Cité de la Musique**, at La Villette (www.cite-musique.fr), is strongest in contemporary music and home to the internationally renowned

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Ensemble Intercontemporain (www.ensembleinter.com). It also features ancient music, jazz, chansons and world music. The Cité has an important venue at the **Conservatoire National de Musique**, 209 avenue Jean Jaurès, 19th (tel: (01) 4040 4545; www.cnsmdp.fr).

A series of orchestras, including the **Orchestre Colonne** (www.orchestrecolonne.fr), **Orchestre Lamoureux** (www.orchestrelamoureux.com) and **Orchestre de Paris** (www.orchestredeparis.com) are based at **Salle Pleyel**, 252 rue du Faubourg-St-Honoré, 8th (tel: (01) 4561 5300). Other prestigious venues for classical music include the **Salle Gaveau**, 45 rue de la Boétie, 8th (tel: (01) 4953 0507), **Théâtre des Champs-Élysées**, 15 avenue Montaigne, 8th (tel: (01) 4952 5050; www.theatrechampselysees.fr), and the **Théâtre Musical de Paris**, 1 place du Châtelet, 1st (tel: (01) 4028 2840; www.chatelet-theatre.com).

Theatre: The **Comédie Française**, 1 place de Colette, 1st (tel: (01) 4458 1515; www.comedie-francaise.fr), is the national theatre, renowned for its production of the classics. **Théâtre National de la Colline**, 15 rue Malte-Brun, 20th (tel: (01) 4462 5252; www.colline.fr), plays contemporary French drama. New talent is sought out at fringe theatres, such as **Guichet-Montparnasse**, 15 rue du Maine, 14th (tel: (01) 4327 8861; www.guichetmontparnasse.com) and the **Bouffes du Nord**, 37 bis boulevard de la Chapelle, 10th (tel: (01) 4607 3450; www.bouffesdunord.com). The **Odéon**, 1 place de l'Odéon, 6th (tel: (01) 4485 4000; www.theatre-odeon.fr), hosts foreign-language productions.

Dance: The main ballet venue is at the **Opéra Garnier** (see *Music* above). Major productions are also held at the prestigious **Théâtre de la Ville**, 2 place du Châtelet, 4th (tel: (01) 4274 2277; www.theatredelaville-paris.com), where the works of high-profile choreographers, such as Karine Saporta, Maguy Marin and Pina Bausch, are frequently shown. The theatre has another venue, **Les Abbesses**, with the same contact details at 31 rue des Abbesses, 18th. The **Théâtre Musical de Paris** (see *Music* above) hosts ballet companies from abroad.

Film: The first public film screening ever ('*Le train entrant en gare*') was shown by the Lumière brothers in Paris in 1895. Today, Paris remains an important cinema capital - in any given week, over 300 films are shown. Hundreds of movies have been shot in Paris since then, but the most recent one to cause a stir was *The Da Vinci Code* (2006), starring Tom Hanks and Audrey Tatou, in which the Louvre features prominently. The scenes of the interior of the Ritz, incidentally, were filmed in a mock up room in a UK studio, with all the furnishings brought in from Paris). There is no English-language cinema in the city; however, most films are shown in the original language, with French subtitles. UGC have a major presence in Paris with the city's largest (18-screen) cinema **UGC Ciné Cité Bercy**, 2 cours St-Emilion, 12th (tel: 0892 700 000). There is also a 16-screen **UGC Ciné Cité Les Halles**, place de la Rotonde, Nouveau Forum des Halles, 1st (tel: 0892 700 000). Although the multiscreen UGCs and Gaumonts are on the increase (many based on the Champs-Élysées and in Montparnasse), Paris is still teeming with small art house cinemas, clustered in the 5th and 6th *arrondissements*. Among these are **Le Champô**, 51 rue des Ecoles, 5th (tel: (01) 4354 5160; www.lechampô.com), near the Sorbonne, and **Racine Odéon**, 6 rue de l'Ecole-de-Médecine, 6th (tel: 0892 689 325), known for its all-night showings. Some cinemas are worth seeing just for their decor - one such is kitsch **Le Grand Rex**, 1 boulevard Poissonnière, 2nd (tel: (01) 4508 9358; www.legrandrex.com).

Amélie or *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain* (2001), directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet (of *Delicatessen* (1991) fame) and *Moulin Rouge* (2001), directed by Baz Luhrmann, were both set in Montmartre and took box offices worldwide by storm. *Paris, je t'aime* (2006) is a filmic tour of the city, consisting of 18 short films of the capital's 20 *arrondissements*. A stellar cast including Gérard Depardieu, Nathalie Portman and Marianne Faithfull worked with celebrated directors such as Gus Van Sant and the Coen brothers.

Literary Notes: The written word and those uttered during long cafe discussions on the Left Bank have done much to create the mythical Paris that visitors still hunt out today.

Victor Hugo's historical novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1831) is set in 15th-century Paris and his *Les Misérables* (1862) in the poverty-stricken Parisian underworld. Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* (1964) depicts the bohemian Paris of the inter-war years. Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* (1934) and *Tropic of Capricorn* (1939) portray a sexier city. A more reflective image is portrayed in Anais Nin's interlocking works. For Nin, Paris allows the development of her sexuality and (perceived as equally sinful) creativity. George Orwell describes the poverty of the 1920s in *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933).

Traces of literary heroes and heroines and their fictional creations are sought throughout the city - in the lingering smoke of the **Café de Flore** and **Les Deux Magots**, boulevard St-Germain, 6th, where the existential discussions between Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Simone de Beauvoir used to rage. James Joyce used to drink at chic **Le Fouquet's**, 99 avenue des Champs-Élysées, 8th, while such luminaries as Jean Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire and Oscar Wilde frequented **Le Procope**, 13 rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie, 6th. Ernest Hemingway dined at the **La Cloiserie des Lilas**, 171 boulevard du Montparnasse, 6th, still popular with the publishing world, and Samuel Beckett's favourite haunt was **Le Select**, 99 boulevard du Montparnasse, 6th.

The place of literary pilgrimage *par excellence* is the **Père Lachaise Cemetery**, presumed resting place of medieval lovers Abélard and Héloïse. They lie in good company, along with the great 17th-century playwright Molière and fable-teller La Fontaine, Oscar Wilde, Sarah Bernhardt, Champollion, Delacroix, Ingres, Géricault, Bizet, Balzac, Proust, Colette and Edith Piaf. Contemporary poet, singer and icon Jim Morrison was famously buried here in 1971. Heather Reyes' *Zade* (2004) is set in Père Lachaise. Ellie Nielsen's *Our Own Piece of Paris* (2008) is a light-hearted account of a couple's attempt to buy the type of idyllic Parisian apartment so many visitors dream of owning in only two weeks.

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