

# 4 Days in Paris: How to Plan the Perfect Paris Itinerary

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When you think of Paris, you will probably already have a picture perfect image in mind. Is it delicious food and wine, paired expertly by some of the world's best chefs? Is it romantic walks on bridges over the Seine at twilight, with the lit up Tour Eiffel in the background? Or perhaps you're dreaming of delving into the top notch art, from the ancient and medieval to the modern displays of the Palais de Tokyo? In all cases, 4 days in Paris will allow you to experience a little bit of the best of what the City of Lights has to offer.

Paris is a huge city with so much to experience and to do it justice would take weeks, if not longer. However, a 4 day Paris itinerary can introduce you to the highlights as we have experienced them. And, if you add some of our additional suggestions to your next trip, you will have plenty of reasons to go back.

Here is an essential guide to your first trip to the French capital, a whistle-stop tour of the *crème de la crème*. From the best times to visit, to top accommodations, to a step-by-step itinerary to suit a long weekend, it's all ready to get you on your way as soon as you land.

*Disclaimer: Some of the links in this post, like hotel links, are affiliate links, meaning at no additional cost to you, we make a little bit of money if you click through and book. That being said, we would never recommend something to you that I don't stand behind 100%.*

## **Where to Stay in Paris**

Paris is divided into neighborhoods called *arrondissements* – each has its own history and personality. If you look at the city map, imagine a snail's shell coming out from the very center and circling clockwise and you'll get the logic behind the numbers.

The best places to stay in Paris, especially for a relatively shorter trip, are the central *arrondissements* from where you can walk to a large number of sights. These include

the **Marais** (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> *arrondissements*) and **St. Germain** (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>). For a more bohemian and immersive experience, we also recommend **Montmartre** (18<sup>th</sup>), **Pigalle** (8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>) and the area around **Canal St. Martin** (10<sup>th</sup>).

Here, we'll give our best picks for accommodation in the Marais and Montmartre – two of the very best bases for anyone exploring the city during a 4 day trip. You can find the other areas in our guide to [where to stay in Paris](#).

## **Hotels vs. Vacation Rentals in Paris: Which to Choose?**

One thing we do want to touch on is vacation rentals in Paris.

Compared to other major cities around the world, Paris is relatively strict when it comes to vacation rental rules, and they are getting stricter every year.

Paris is in the midst of a full-fledged housing crisis, with housing costs rising year-over-year for the past several years, and while we wouldn't point to vacation rentals as the primary cause, they're certainly a contributing factor.

I have mixed feelings about staying in vacation rentals in cities.

On one hand, as a traveler who has Celiac Disease and usually needs access to a kitchen, they are a godsend

that has allowed me to travel to places that just would not have been easy to visit if I had to stay in a hotel, where I MIGHT get a mini-fridge.

On the other hand, in cities where there's a housing crisis driven by a lack of supply and surging demand, vacation rentals contribute to the problem by taking long term rental units off the market, since the landlord can usually make more money by renting it out for a weekend at a time.

There are certainly pros and cons to staying in vacation rentals. **To be a responsible traveler, our recommendation would be to choose hotels in big cities.**

There are tons of great hotels in Paris, so you'll have no problem finding an amazing place to stay.

## **Le Marais (3rd & 4th Arr.) – The Heart of Paris**

This is the very heart of the city, with gorgeous old apartment buildings with views of the Tour Eiffel and a maze of old streets with cobblestones and quaint shops. You'll rub shoulders with elegant suit-clad business people walking home with their *baguettes* in the evening, but will also get to mingle with the hipsters who go out to the area's many bars and cafes. Bakeries are on every corner and you'll be steps away from the Louvre, Notre-Dame cathedral and more.

The Marais is also a great place to shop. The Rue de Rivoli is lined with bigger brand stores going towards the Louvre, but if you stick around in the area of Rue Vieille du Temple and Rue des Francs Bourgeois you will find some more unique shops, from bespoke perfumeries to quaint fashionable clothes stores.

## **Places to Stay in Le Marais**

The [Hotel Les Tournelles](#), just near the Place des Vosges, is one of our favorite picks for staying in the Marais as it combines a modern, comfortable interior with an outstanding location for your 4 day trip to Paris. Upscale toiletries and rainfall showers are a lovely bonus and the room rate includes breakfast.

For a boutique hotel, we recommend [Hotel Georgette](#), a stone's throw away from the Centre Georges Pompidou. Prices are in the mid-range for the quality of the accommodation and you get an exceptional buffet breakfast.

## **Montmartre (18th Arr.) – Where Romance is Always in the Air**

Head to the 18<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* in the footsteps of

painters and romantics. At the foot of the gorgeous Sacré Coeur church, you will find a maze of cobblestoned streets filled with artists ready to paint your portrait for a few euros.

Once home to Degas, Picasso and Renoir, Montmartre continues to attract bohemians and has a jovial, friendly atmosphere with bars with cheap wine and live entertainment and throngs of tourists lining the streets. If you choose to stay here, be aware that you'll very likely hear the noise of the street until the early hours... unless, of course, you're out there enjoying the atmosphere!

You can't beat Montmartre for a romantic sunset view across Paris and you'll be just a short hop on the Metro away from the rest of the tourist hotspots.

## **Places to stay in Montmartre**

The [Hotel des Arts](#) is one of the best picks for a romantic getaway, steps away from the Moulin Rouge and a short walk to Sacré Coeur. You'll also be very close to Rue des Abbesses with its great restaurants and independent shops.

For an even more boutique experience, head to the [Mom'Art Hotel](#) on Rue d'Orsel, close to Sacré Coeur and offering fantastic rooms for the location. It's family run, every room is different, and even has an on-site bar, restaurant and spa.

# Tips for Visiting Paris

During your 4 days in Paris, you'll come across some of the clichés about Parisians, as well as some specific French lifestyle elements that are worth knowing about. But don't be put off by the myth that Parisians are rude and unaccommodating to tourists! As long as you greet everyone with a *Bonjour* and make sure to be polite, most locals we've encountered have been absolutely lovely.

- Many shops and convenience stores are closed on Sundays so check hours in advance.
- Similarly, museums and places of interest typically have a day a week when they're closed, but it's not always the same. Check before you go.
- Don't spend money on bottled water in restaurants (unless you really want to!). It's quite expensive, whereas filtered tap water is free. Ask for a *carafe d'eau*. Tap water is also safe to drink in your accommodation, so fill up and carry it with you.
- Traffic can get busy in the center so prioritize walking or taking the Metro if you need to go further.
- Wine is cheap and the drink of choice at restaurants. The house wine is almost always excellent. Cider and beer are also popular drinks, although you'll find



more commercial than craft beer in regular bars. Craft beer bars are growing in popularity and we can recommend the Belleville neighborhood where there's a cluster of them. [La Fine Mousse](#) and [Les Trois 8](#) are great, both a stone's throw away from Ménilmontant Metro.

## **4 Days in Paris: A Complete 4 Day Paris Itinerary**

Paris truly has something for everyone. From history buffs to art lovers, to technology enthusiasts and those looking for architectural wonders, it's all there. With so much to experience it's definitely tempting to try to pack in all the sights, but then you'll find you don't have much time to "live like a Parisian". And that would be a shame.

To make the most out of Paris, plan to do one or two major sights a day, and dedicate the rest to walking around the neighborhoods while leaving yourself energy to go out for a drink and some dancing or live entertainment in the evenings. We'd recommend no more than two big museum visits during a 4-day trip to Paris, so you can fully enjoy them and retain the information.

Regardless of your interests, we think the **Louvre** will give the best all around experience of all the art and history you can take in during a long weekend. Aside from the Louvre, we'd recommend adding the **Musée d'Orsay** and/or **the Musée du Quai Branly**, the **Notre Dame**, the **Eiffel Tower** or the **Arc de Triomphe**, and the **Sainte-Chappelle**.

It's nearly impossible to distill everything that Paris has to offer into just a few days of visiting, but the following itinerary tries to cover as much as possible without being overwhelming. Adjust the order depending on where you're staying or what bookings you're able to make while you're there.

**What to Book in Advance:** In general, to make sure you're actually able to make it to some of the top sights in Paris, we'd recommend booking 2-3 months in advance for the Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, the Eiffel Tower (if you want to go to the top), and Versailles. This is particularly important if you're visiting over the summer, when we've seen crazy lines for some of Paris' top sights, and it's less

important in the off-season (though we'd still book the Louvre in advance).

## **Day 1: Walking Tour, Musée d'Orsay, Montmartre**

Start by taking in Paris on foot – one of the best ways to get oriented to the layout, but also an opportunity to capture scenic views and to learn a little about the history of the city without having your head buried in a book as you're walking along.

We recommend organized walking tours to allow you to learn the essentials, as well as some extra secrets of the city. Check out their themed paid tours, or you can take a free tour just to get your bearings on your first day.

### **Morning: A Walking Tour**

Head to the St. Michel Fountain in the Latin Quarter – the popular meeting place of students ahead of a night out! Here you'll meet an excellent free walking tour of Paris that lasts about three hours, finishing at the Louvre. The [Sandemans New Europe](#) tour is perfect for showing you everything there is to see quickly, while inspiring you for stops later on during your 4 day trip to Paris. Remember to tip the tour guide!

If you want to take your walking experience up a notch, opt for a paid version with an expert. A good paid tour worth considering is Context Travel's [Paris in a Half-Day](#),

which also includes a visit to the Eiffel Tower. We've done Context Travel tours in other cities, and like them because they're generally led by someone with either a PhD or Masters degree, which means they can paint a vivid picture of the context (I see what they did there) behind the sights and sounds you're taking in along the way. This four hour tour takes in lots of monuments and you can even splurge on a private tour (pricey!).

### **Afternoon: Musée d'Orsay**

If you've done the three hour free tour of Paris, you'll finish in front of the Louvre. Grab a snack for lunch before you head to the [Musée d'Orsay](#) (save the Louvre for now, as your head will be bursting with information after a full morning!).

If you're an art lover, this is the other big museum you must see in Paris. Not only is the Musée d'Orsay a beautiful building in an old railway station by the Seine, with stunning architecture from the 1800s, it also houses some of the best impressionist art. You'll feast your eyes on Cézanne, Degas, Monet, and many others.

Your museum map will point out a few highlights, but make sure not to miss the *Bal du Moulin de la Galette* by Pierre-August Renoir with its energetic, lively atmosphere; Edouard Manet's quizzical *Olympia*; Vincent Van Gogh's *Starry Night* and Claude Monet's *Blue Water Lilies*.

The Musée d'Orsay is a short walk across the Seine from the Louvre – take the Pont des Arts and check out all the couples' padlocks tied to it. The regular opening hours are 9.30 am to 6 pm every day except Monday.

## **Evening: Montmartre & Sacré Coeur**

Having immersed yourself in the romance of impressionist art the Musée d'Orsay, why not keep that vibe going by taking a tour of the most romantic neighborhood of Paris? [Montmartre](#) is great to visit at sunset, where the lowering sun casts a golden glow over the city as you admire it from the steps in front of the Sacré Coeur cathedral. Stroll along the ivy clad buildings on narrow cobblestoned streets and watch the free art shows.

# Visit Sacré Coeur Just Before Closing Time

The basilica of [Sacré Coeur](#) stays open until 10:30 pm in the summer to allow tourists to catch a glimpse of the interior as they flock to the area in the evenings. Make sure you don't stop for too many souvenir peddlers in this area – you might fall victim to pick pockets!

Instead, head inside and, if you have enough energy, climb the 234 spiraling steps to the top of the dome (open until 7 pm only). On a clear day the sprawling views are spectacular!

## Other Montmartre Highlights

Did you know that Montmartre has a vineyard? [Vignes du Clos](#) can be found on the rue des Saules, a three minute walk from the lively Place du Tertre (one of the most touristy spots in all of Paris, with buskers and portrait artists).

If you want to buy souvenirs, we recommend the rue des Martyrs. And, if you're feeling extra romantic, head to the Montmartre cemetery to visit the gravestones of writers such as Émile Zola, Alexandre Dumas (fils) and Stendhal. After the famous Père Lachaise, this is the most celebrated resting place in Paris.

Finally, you can't visit Montmartre without taking in a cabaret show. The most famous, of course, is the [Moulin Rouge](#). You can book dinner and a show here and feel like you're going back in time, enjoying the joyous music and

atmosphere. Be careful though: the Boulevard de Clichy is full of peep shows and some sordid characters after dark!

## **Day 2: The Louvre and Le Marais**

It's time to go high brow with culture this morning. Head to the Louvre as early as you can to beat the crowds (even with a pre-booked ticket). After digesting the incredible collection at one of the world's most famous museums, head to Le Marais for a self-guided adventure before ending with sunset atop the Arc de Triomphe.

### **Morning: The Louvre**

At the Louvre, you'll encounter the best and most eclectic art collection of your trip. The museum is worth spending at least three hours in, even if you just plan on ticking off a few highlights. The vast palace started as a fortress in



the early 13th century, becoming a national museum in 1793. The exquisite collection was built by subsequent French governments, sometimes controversially, bringing in art from all over Europe, as well as Assyrian, Etruscan, Greek, Coptic and Islamic art and antiquities.

Make sure you check out the **Mona Lisa**, the **Victory of Samothrace (or Winged Victory)**, the **Venus de Milo** and the moving paintings ***The Raft of the Medusa*** by Théodore Géricault and ***Liberty Leading the People*** by Eugène Delacroix (the famous scene you'll have seen of the symbol of the Republic, Marianne).

One note about the Louvre – the collection is VAST. There are so many items in the Louvre's collection it's tough to navigate and figure out what to prioritize. A guided tour can help, plus you'll get to skip the entry line and help you make sense of the incredibly collection at the museum. We love the "[Closing Time at the Louvre](#)" by Take Walks, which aims to take you through the top sights at the least busy times. Starting at 6:45 pm, this is the most peaceful way to visit the museum, although it means adjusting your itinerary to suit.

Another great tour option is the [Semi-Private Louvre Highlights Tour](#), which will include a visit to the Mona Lisa, the French Romantics, top Italian artworks and the Crown Jewels. It only takes two hours but you won't have to wait in line or wander the halls in search of your favorite painting. Once the tour is over, you can spend the

next couple hours delving into the areas that have caught your eye.

If you plan to go on your own, the Louvre is open daily except Tuesday, from 9 am to 6 pm, with the exception of January 1, May 1 and December 25. We suggest [booking tickets online](#), costing €17, as you might not find any at the museum (although they will be a tiny bit cheaper at €15).

## **Afternoon: Le Marais**

Le Marais literally means “marsh” – it was converted to farmland in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and became a fashionable district in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century when Henry IV built the Place Royale (now the Place des Vosges). It is now full of funky bars and restaurants, as well as home to many

designer boutiques. The most fashionable area is moving slowly north, with Haut Marais (upper Marais) now commanding the attention of rising talent with vintage fashion and hip places to eat.

## **Self-Guided Walking Tour of Le Marais**

Take this [self-guided walking tour](#) to see the best of the Marais:

- Start at the [Marché les Enfants Rouges](#) around the corner from the hip modern art museum at the Centre Pompidou (very avant-garde!). This 1615 covered market is the oldest market in the city, full of any food you might crave at lunchtime! Buy some snacks to go and head down to the Jardin des Archives Nationales to eat in the park.
- Next stop is the [Picasso Museum](#) – celebrating the artist and his followers. It might be too much to take in after the Louvre, so it could be one to return to in the future if you don't have the energy.
  - Alternatively, check out the small workshop of Romanian-born sculptor [Constantin Brancusi](#) just off the side of Centre Pompidou where you can catch a glimpse of his sculptures. Walk around the front of the Centre Pompidou to check out the whimsical [Fontaine Stravinsky](#) before returning to the tour.

- On the way back from the Pompidou you'll pass the quaint shop of **Nature et Découvertes** on the Rue Sainte-Croix de la Bretonnerie. Browse the shelves for cute trinkets before carrying on.
- Next up, stroll down the Rue de Rosiers past some favorite take out places of Parisians, such as L'As du Falafel, through the Jewish quarter and on to where the Rue de Rivoli turns into Rue Saint-Antoine and you enter the very hip area of La Bastille. Check out the **Fromagerie Laurent Dubois** for an exquisite cheese collection!
- Finally, no visit to Paris would be complete without checking out the [Alain Ducasse chocolaterie](#). Walk past the historic Place des Vosges and taste some delicious desserts here, before heading back around and finishing your tour in the Place de la Bastille.

## **Notre Dame and Sainte-Chapelle**

From the Place de la Bastille, we strongly recommend visiting either the Notre Dame or the Sainte-Chappelle, or both, depending on the time you have to spare. They are both on the Île de la Cité, roughly across the Pont Neuf from the Louvre.

For medieval art lovers and those looking to stroll through some of the most romantic church aisles, you cannot miss the **Notre Dame Cathedral**. Depending on how much detail you want to take in, you can walk through relatively quickly, admiring the gothic arches and the beautiful stained glass windows. Climb up to the tower for gorgeous views.

Unfortunately, the cathedral is currently closed following the fire that broke out in April 2019, but you can still admire it as you pass by.

If you're in Paris on a sunny day and have a couple of hours to spare marveling at some of the best stained glass windows in the world, then we wholeheartedly recommend [Sainte-Chappelle](#).

You can find this small gem of a church within the Palais de Justice. It's a small, maybe not particularly imposing building from the outside, but the real spectacle can be found inside the chapel. It is considered Paris' most exquisite Gothic monument and well worth a detour.

## **Rive Droite Walk**

As the Seine splits Paris across the middle, it sections it into the Rive Gauche (Left Bank) and Rive Droite (Right Bank). Explore the latter if you have energy left once you arrive at the Place de la Bastille after the Marais tour above.

This walk takes you along the banks of the Seine, overlooking the Notre Dame and Sainte-Chappelle from across the water, before heading to a few more interesting parts of the city:

- The **Jardin du Palais Royal** – A beautiful garden in the heart of the city, built around the 17<sup>th</sup> century Royal Palace. A great place to stop and smell the roses (literally!).
- Head on to the **Tuileries Gardens**, where Parisians enjoy sitting on the lounge chairs by the fountains or taking walks with their friends. Cross it from the Louvre to the **Place de la Concorde** to end up in the wide square with the Obelisk (it is 3300 years old and engraved with Egyptian hieroglyphics).
- Carrying on along the Seine you'll find the **Grand Palais** – built for the 1900 World's Fair, it is home to several exhibitions. Check out the amazing 8.5-ton art nouveau glass roof!
- Finish your walk on the **Champs-Élysées**, strolling towards the **Arc de Triomphe**. It's sunset by now, so the perfect opportunity to visit the Arc and climb to get a beautiful view of the city as the sun highlights the golden rooftops.

## The Arc de Triomphe

From the Place de l'Étoile looking up, you're bound to be charmed by the **Arc de Triomphe**. The height of Hausmannian architecture and city planning is on display here: from the star-shaped arrangement of tree-lined boulevards to the elegant buildings. We recommend crossing the busy roundabout to have a look at the monument and climb the 284 steps to the viewing platform at the top, from where you can see the avenues in their full splendor.

The **Arc de Triomphe** can be reached through an underpass from the northern side of the Champs-Élysées, bringing you to just underneath the arch. You can buy tickets to the viewing platform in the tunnel.

**Evening in Canal Saint-Martin**



Whether you're staying here or just visiting for the evening, the Canal Saint-Martin is a delight for going out for a peaceful walk along the canals and then grabbing a drink in the trendy bars and pubs in the neighborhood.

Here are some of our top picks for a cocktail, although you can't really go wrong, there are so many excellent choices in this vibrant part of town.

**Early June**: A wine bar and eatery with organic and natural wines, with atypical choices for your standard Parisian brasserie.

**Gravity Bar**: We love this bar for its vegetarian and gluten free food options as much as for the amazing cocktails.

**La Cidrerie**: Here's your chance to become familiar with all the ciders of France! This bar has them all, from Normandy to Brittany and including smaller, boutique brands. The staff is very friendly and happy to help you navigate a tasting. Food options also available.

## **Day 3: Left Bank and the Eiffel Tower**

You may wake up with a fuzzy head after bar hopping the night before, but the perfect remedy will be to spend the day outdoors. You'll explore the Left Bank and finish off with a picnic dinner under the stars and the Eiffel Tower lights. As you make your way along the self-guided walking tour of the Left Bank in the morning, grab wine, cheese, bread, and accompaniments for your picnic

basket.

## **Morning: The Left Bank**

Head over the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* just across the street from the **Le Bon Marché department store** (a French institution dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century selling upmarket fashion, beauty, and gourmet food) – the closest station is going to be **Sevres – Babylone**.

Grab a coffee at the [Ten Belles](#) coffee shop on Rue du Cherche-Midi and then make your way to the **Jardin du Luxembourg**, where you can sit among the flowers and enjoy the sunshine. As you walk up towards Rue Bonaparte, you'll pass the current Senate meeting place, the Palais du Luxembourg.

Arrive at the [Église Saint-Sulpice](#), best known today as

one of the settings in *The DaVinci Code*. The church took 150 years to build and has some beautiful frescoes by Delacroix inside.

Once you're out, turn onto Rue Mabillon, then go left on Rue Guisarde for a treat. The [Amorino](#) ice cream chain has a shop here, nestled in between delicious delis and right next to the Marché Saint-Germain.

Come back on Rue Bonaparte to reach **Saint-Germain-des-Près**, Paris' oldest standing church built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. From here, you can see the famous **Café de Flore** and **Les Deux Magots**, the cafes where artists, writers and socialites spent all their time at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sit and have a coffee outside or look in at the gorgeous interiors, pretty much unchanged for over a century.

Continue your walk on the Boulevard Saint-Germain with an optional detour by **La Dernière Goutte**, to browse through an excellent selection of wines and grab a bottle for your evening picnic. Any cheese fan will find something they like at the **Fromagerie Laurent Dubois**, after which you'll finish your walking tour at the charming [Shakespeare and Company](#) – the iconic new and used bookstore that's been attracting book lovers since 1951. From its doorsteps, you can see the Square René Viviani, where you'll find [the oldest tree in Paris](#).

*Image credit: zefart / Shutterstock.com*

## **Afternoon: A Touch of Art and More Gourmet Food**

As you approach the Eiffel Tower, make your way to the [Musée Rodin](#), one of the most exquisite art collections by the sculptor. Auguste Rodin donated his entire collection to the French state in 1908 under the condition that his former workshop and showroom display his works. You can now visit the museum as a beautiful artistic stop on your 4 day Paris itinerary, with our favorite activity being to wander through the sculpture garden.

You can get single tickets or a combined ticket with the Musée d'Orsay for €21 (our recommendation).

## **Rue Cler – A Gourmet Pedestrian Street You Cannot Miss**

Finally, before the day is over, wander the mouthwatering **Rue Cler** and pick up the last items for your picnic.

There's another Amorino, or the **Ladurée** bakery with its world famous macarons, as well as a must visit shop for tea lovers: [Mariage Frères](#) makes exquisite blends, from the latest harvest of Darjeeling to a host of teas from Japan and beyond. You may need advice from the shop assistant.

## **Evening: The Eiffel Tower**

One of the most iconic images you'll see during your 4 days in Paris, the Eiffel Tower can be glimpsed from all around central Paris, including beautiful views from the bridges across the Seine (the Pont d'Iéna links the Jardins du Trocadéro with the Champ de Mars where the tower stands) and from the Hôtel des Invalides (which is

worth checking out during your walks around the city for its golden roofs and imposing stature).

If you want to get a postcard perfect view of Paris, we actually recommend going to the top of the Arc de Triomphe or the Tour Montparnasse, as the Eiffel Tower will then be included in the view.

But, of course, the attraction of climbing it is irresistible. Check out options for taking elevators to the second or third floor viewing decks, or tackle it on foot up to the second floor platform (the south pillar will welcome you with 1665 steps in total!). You'll need to get tickets either way and we recommend [booking online](#) to avoid huge lines.

## **Eiffel Tower Light Show**

On a clear summer evening, it's worth sitting in the Jardins du Trocadéro to enjoy the light show that takes place at the top of the hour every hour for five minutes.

Enjoy your gourmet treats and relax after a long walk around Paris before you hit the next day's sights.

## **Go For a Night Cap**

The area around the Rue de l'Université and Avenue Bosquet just near the Eiffel Tower is full of great bars to go for a late night drink. Try [The Gatsby](#) for a chic 20s atmosphere or head to [L'Éclair](#) un Rue Cler for a laid-

back, tourist friendly atmosphere (also does excellent breakfasts or brunches and great coffee).

## **Day 4: Versailles**

Literally crown your 4 day trip to Paris with a visit to the Sun King's Palace. Louis XIV transformed his father's hunting lodge on the outskirts of Paris into the monumental Château de Versailles in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, creating the most famous and grandest sight in France. It is enormous and splendid at the same time, with all you might expect in terms of lavish ornaments. Make time for the impeccably maintained gardens strewn with sculptures and several notable stops, too.

### **Getting There**

The easiest way to get to Versailles is on the **RER C** from central Paris (make sure to go for the **Versailles Château station** and NOT the Porte de Versailles, which is in a different place altogether on the 12 line).

Trains run every 15 minutes from 5:30 am and we recommend getting there early (the trip takes around 40 minutes from Invalides, to give you an idea). Tickets cost €3.65 and you can buy them at the station you're leaving from. You will find helpful signs as you exit the station.

## Visiting Versailles

We recommend a full day of visiting to get the most out of your trip to Versailles. Book your tickets [online](#) and you will get a time slot for your visit, helping you plan the day. You can also download a [free mobile app](#) instead of



taking an audio guide around. It has maps and extra information, too.

A full ticket costs €20 for access to the whole estate and is the best option for seeing the palace, the gardens, and anything you might have time for.

**Note:** The palace opens at 8 am and is closed on Mondays.

## **Versailles Top Sights**

The Château and grounds are so vast that the best way to see all the notable parts is to hire a guide. However, here are some must do activities:

- Visit the Royal Apartments;
- Wander through the Hall of Mirrors and imagine

you're at a ball;

- Roam through the gardens and stop at Bassin de Neptune with its 99 fountains;
- If you can, time your visit so you're there for the Musical Fountains Shows (day and night time displays of water "dancing" set to music, taking place in the summer – extra fees apply, see details [here](#)).

## Guided Tours

To take the stress out of getting to the palace and marching through the whole property on your own, here are our picks for guided tours:

- [Context Travel Versailles Palace and Garden Tour](#) – A four hour experience taking you through key sights while a historian tells you the stories behind them.
- [Take Walks Closing Time at Versailles](#) – Go in at the final entrance time of the day and spend four and half hours in a small group, taking in the gardens during the afternoon and then visiting the palace once most of the crowds have left.

## What To Do With More Time

This 4 day trip to Paris is packed full of the must see places and activities in the city, but there's always more if

you're there for a little while longer or choose to skip some of the above recommendations.

Some suggestions include:

- [The Musée du Quai Branly](#) – A museum of indigenous and folk art from around the world, offering a great immersive experience, right by the Eiffel Tower.
- [Disneyland](#) – For those who want to relive their childhood, or ideal if visiting with small children – expect to spend a whole day there.
- [The Cité des sciences et de l'industrie](#) – Europe's biggest science museum, with amazing permanent exhibitions on the human brain, energy, and more, as well as very interesting temporary shows.
- A pilgrimage to the [Père Lachaise Cemetery](#) where you can find the tombs of famous people including Oscar Wilde, Molière, Edith Piaf, Balzac, Chopin, and Jim Morrison.
- Learn about the history of Paris at the [Musée Carnavalet](#).

## The Best Time to Visit Paris

As a multicultural European city that's home to over 2

million people, Paris has plenty to offer all year round, regardless of weather or events. However, there are some particularly worthy aspects of each season in the city.

**Summer in Paris** is hot and sunny, and there are tons of local events to enjoy. If you visit in June, you'll be able to take in night-time street entertainment during the [Fête de la Musique](#) which takes place on the longest day of the year, June 21.

Go in July and you might catch the fireworks of **Bastille Day** on the 14<sup>th</sup> while you enjoy a picnic on the Champ de Mars. But be aware that August is a so-called "dead season" as most Parisians take their annual summer vacation then.

Prices in Paris are highest in summer because it's the peak tourist season, but you can have an amazing time in the city in **fall or spring**, when temperatures are mild and you can catch some amazing scenery in the many parks and public gardens. The [Jardin du Luxembourg](#) is enchanting with its rose garden and orchids. If you visit **Versailles**, prepare for long strolls through the grounds admiring fall foliage.

Finally, **winter in Paris** can be cold and grey, without snow but a disagreeable drizzle that cuts to the bone. However, there are many indoor attractions to warm you up. You can enjoy the [open-air skating rink](#) at **Jardin du Trocadéro** or get into the holiday spirit by strolling

through the Christmas markets.

## **How Many Days in Paris?**

Paris is massive. Which begs the question, how many days should you spend in Paris?

We think that 4 days is the absolute minimum you should spend. Anything less will have you jetting around from sight to sight with no time to relax and experience what truly makes Paris special. The cobblestone streets in Montmartre. Wandering Le Marais. Relaxing on the banks of the Seine.

That being said, 4 days is enough time to see the major sites and leave plenty of time for exploring.

This itinerary is meant to help you see the best of the city

without needing a vacation from your vacation.

If you have more time, we have recommendations above on how to spend it. However, you could also just pick a neighborhood and spend a day wandering from shop to shop, coffee to coffee, wine bar to wine bar.

That sounds like a perfect day in Paris to us.

## **Getting to Paris**

Traveling into Paris is most convenient by plane and you'll likely arrive at **Charles de Gaulle International Airport (CDG)**, a short train or taxi ride from the city center.

## **Flying to Paris**

Most international flights touch down at **Charles de Gaulle (CDG)**. The RER B train is the most convenient way to get to the city center once you land. It's a popular mode of transportation and you'll find it really crowded at times, but it's the most affordable option you'll find. Check out all you need to know in [this guide](#).

The other big air hub for Paris is **Orly Airport (ORY)**, frequently a point of arrival for budget airlines or flights from within Europe. You can take the RER B Train into the center of Paris (you'll be almost at the other end from Charles de Gaulle) or a dedicated bus called Orlyval. Here is the detailed [guide](#) on each option.

From either airport, [Uber](#) works well for getting into the city center and doesn't cost a fortune. It can be a great alternative if you have a lot of bags or are traveling in a group, so you don't have to put up with busy public transportation.

## Arriving by Train

From within France or neighboring European countries, you can arrive in Paris at various train stations throughout the city. The **Gare Du Nord** is – as the name suggests – on the northern end of town and in a slightly seedy neighborhood, so we recommend jumping straight onto the Metro from there to your accommodation.

Other train stations include the **Gare de Lyon, Gare**

**d'Austerlitz** and **Gare de Montparnasse**, among others. Where they are in the city reflects which part of the country they're coming in from. All are well connected to the Metro system that will take you to your accommodation easily.

## Getting Around Paris

Paris is famous for its efficient Metro network with scenic entrances that adorn many posters (especially from Montparnasse). It is a great way to get around Paris if you need to cover longer distances or if you're staying a bit out of the center. This [guide](#) will tell you all you need to know about using the Metro.

If you plan to use public transportation, the [RATP](#) (Paris Transport Authority) has a useful app for planning your



journey and a helpful website in English. A pass will get you a trip on the Metro or buses and you can even take advantage of a good network of night buses (the Metro runs until 1 am roughly). If you don't want to deal with the hassle of a travel pass, you can buy a ticket at the machines upon entering a Metro station (you can pay by card and they are all also in English) or a bus ticket from your driver (you'll need cash).

At the same time, there's no better way to really get to know the city than on foot. This Paris itinerary has been designed with walking in mind, allowing you to cluster together different essential aspects of Parisian tourism each day. During your 4 day trip to Paris, you'll be able to take in lots of the key sights, as the old city center isn't all that big.

Finally, if you plan to take taxis, our recommendation is to use a pre-paid app like Uber for upfront pricing and peace of mind.

**Bonus tip:** As any city with a major river, Paris can be explored by boat! The *péniches* are a great way to see the sights from the Seine. Cruise dinners like [this one](#) leave from the center and take you around the city at night. You can opt for a dinner or drinks while on board and there's an app to listen to key information about what you're seeing.

Paris is on pretty much everyone's bucket list, and for

good reason. We hope this 4 day Paris itinerary ticks the boxes of as many great sights as possible, allowing you to explore the city in the shortest time.

**About the Contributor:** Alecsa Stewart is a freelance writer, ultra runner, and world traveler. She was fortunate enough to study in Paris for two years in university and postgraduate programs, so she got to know the city inside out and become addicted to those Amorino ice creams! She now lives in the French Pyrenees but agrees that "*Paris is always a good idea*" and goes back to the city whenever she can. Alecsa writes for running and travel publications around the world. You can see more of her work [here](#).