



TRAVEL

“We’ll always have Paris”



By Richard Levy

I used to work for an advertising agency in Brussels and on Friday nights I'd usually be enjoying a delicious dinner and a glass of wine while watching the countryside flash by on the train to Paris. My weekends there were invariably amazing. No city anywhere in the world as captivating in so many ways as the magnificent City of Light. It's not just a city, it's more like a living, breathing museum.

I always stay at the charming Hotel Caron de Beaumarchais. Formerly an 18th Century home in the Marais area of Paris, Hotel Caron has small, but lovely rooms with private bathrooms and attentive service, including a romantic breakfast in bed served until noon every day. (So sleep late one day.) It's in a great location; about \$175 a night and worth every Franc.

My very favorite thing about being in Paris is unequivocally the incredible food you'll find everywhere you go. Yes, I'm a foodie and I've been told I'm a pretty good chef. You see, Parisians don't eat to live; they live to eat. Eating a spectacular meal is almost a religious ritual

for Parisians. Cooking is one of the highest art forms in the City of Lights.

I'll tell you about my five favorite restaurants later, but here are my thoughts on how to make your Paris vacation as special as possible. On your first day take one of the “Hop on Hop off” topless tour buses that stop at all the places you'll want to see, then come back the next day and spend time at the places that interest you the most. The tour bus will also help orient you to what's what and where. Be sure to pick up a good map.

Stop for a leisurely lunch at almost any outdoor café and relax over a glass of wine, some casual, but delicious French food and of course, people watch. My favorite places are Le Café Flore and Les Deux Magots where Hemingway wrote most of “The Sun Also Rises”.

These are my absolutely must see places in Paris:

You must spend at least a few hours at the Louvre admiring Mona Lisa, Venus de Milo and Winged Victory. (Pick up a Museum pass online before you leave NY to avoid waiting on long lines to purchase tickets: with the pass you'll go to the front of the line.)

Visit the Eiffel Tower. Built for the



Eiffel Tower • Place de la Concorde 8th arrondissement Paris, France Photo © Paris Tourism Office / Jair Lanes

1900 World's Fair and controversial at the time, it has since become the icon of Paris and one of the best-known structures in the world. Take the elevator to the top for breathtaking vistas of Paris.

Spend some time at one of the most famous Cathedrals in the world, Notre Dame, located on the Isle de la Cité. Gaze up at the Gargoyles guarding

the Cathedral, but don't expect to see Quasimodo ringing the bell.

Enjoy a boat ride on the Seine, which will also give you a good idea of where everything in Paris is located. Don't take the popular, Bateau Mouches. Instead, take the Vedettes du Pont Neuf, which in my opinion offers the best boat ride. It is also less crowded and employs engaging English speaking guides.

Visit La Sainte-Chapelle on Isle de la Cité and view the most prized historical possession in Christian world, Christ's Crown of Thorns as well as the spectacular, soaring stained glass windows.

One evening at twilight, you must go to the hills above Paris to Montmartre, where you're sure to be awed by Sacre-Coeur, the white basilica which, when illuminated, could make anyone a believer. Climb to the top for some of the most spectacular views of Paris.

The traffic swirling around the magnificent Arc de Triomphe is a fierce and there are no apparent rules. I find the monument is best viewed from the safety of the sidewalk at the start of the grand boulevard, the Champs-Élysées. Take a leisurely stroll and stop at Café for a glass of wine or Pernod and watch the crowds going by.

If you love the Impressionists as much as I do, spend a couple of hours at the Musée d'Orsay, housing the largest collection of Impressionist paintings in Europe.

You don't have to be an Opera lover to visit Palais Garnier, a grand “Belle Époque” theater with a spectacular ceiling painted by Chagall.

Shop and be awed by the dazzling, art nouveau Galeries Lafayette; a magnificent 10 story department store with its dramatic steel structure topped by a huge byzantine glass dome.

One day have a picnic at the historic Place des Vosages, possibly the most beautiful square in a city of beautiful public spaces. Pick up baguettes still hot from the oven, cheese, pate and a bottle of wine at nearby Marché (market) d'Aligre.

Your hotel can book a tour to the royal palace of Versailles, the crown jewel of France, but you can just as easily hop on a train at the Gare de l'Est – it is just an hour away. You will marvel at the splendor of the gardens and the royal apartments. Be sure to visit Le Petit Trianon, the small chateau located on the palace grounds where Marie Antoinette would escape from court for quiet time alone.

Spend time at the Centre Pompidou, the modern art museum with its purposely unfinished look, located in the colorful Les Halle's area. One of the oldest Brasseries in Paris is Have Au Pied de Cochon. Have lunch there and order the breaded pig's trotters or beef-braised pork knuckle. (Yes, the restaurant's name is “The Pigs Foot.”)

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La victoire de Samothrace. © Paris Tourist Office - Photographer : Amélie Dupont



La Sainte Chapelle Isle de St Louis



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Visit the Marais, the historic old Jewish neighborhood of Paris, now a hipster hangout and trendy place to live, with interesting shops, boutiques and restaurants. If you are homesick already for an old-fashioned Jewish deli, bagels and lox or a nice hot pastrami sandwich, head for Florence Kahn restaurant.

Sleep late one day, have breakfast in bed and make no plans. Later on, wander through some of the most interesting Paris neighborhoods. My favorites are the ancient streets on Ile de la Cité, the oldest part of Paris, and a walk around the Latin Quarter on the Left Bank. For a more elegant stroll, go to the Opera Garnier and Galeries Lafayette on the Right Bank. Whichever direction you choose, you can't miss in Paris. Everywhere you walk, you will find charming little Bistros

and Cafes with fabulous, affordable food and wine.

Take the Metro everywhere, it's the fastest way to get anywhere in Paris, but it is not a linear, since Paris is not laid out on a grid plan and New Yorkers will find it takes a bit of getting used to. Once you figure it out, it is an awesome system that allows you to change directions easily.

My Five Favorite Paris Restaurants:

Le Grand Velfour: Established 1789. Victor Hugo, Jean Cocteau and Napoleon and Presidents have eaten here. Order their frogs legs in sorrel sauce.

La Coupole: One of the most historic and popular brasseries of Paris, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de



*Musée du Louvre; Pyramide du Louvre Place du Carrousel Quarter: Musée du Louvre - Palais-Royal 1 arrondissement Paris, France Architect: Ieoh Ming Pei
Photo © Paris Tourism Office / Jacques Lebar*

Beauvoir were regulars. Order their caramelized apple and pan fried foie gras or beef flambéed with cognac.

Le Bistro Paul Bert: I love the faded 30's décor and boisterous crowd; anything your order here is: “très bon.” Have their steak frites, the best in Paris. I also recommend their monk fish with white beans and the roast duck glazed with pears.

Bofinger Brasserie: One of the most renowned Belle Époque era restaurants with its art nouveau glass dome created by Gustave Eiffel who designed the Eiffel Tower. Order the Rolled filets of saddle of lamb baked in a salt crust with stuffed artichokes or sautéed sweetbreads with stir-fried chanterelles.

Le Pre Catelon: Located in the middle of the beautiful Bois de Boulogne, this is a romantic dinner setting. I order their bone marrow prepared two ways, one peppered and the other, stuffed with porcini mushrooms and cabbage braised in a beef sauce. Two waiters will bring your main courses under silver domes, place them in front of you and together they will lift the domes with a flourish to reveal your beautifully prepared food.

I'm usually in bed early, but if you'd like to go to one of the Paris trendy disco clubs and sample the famed Paris nightlife, try and get into either “Kong” or “Cab.” (To get past the bouncer, act cocky, but polite, say something clever in French and of course look fabulous.) To see a show that's risqué, raucous, and fun, go to the Crazy Horse Saloon or The Lido. But if you're more like me, you'll absolutely love the Au Lapin Agile, an authentic French cabaret right

out of the 19th Century. Founded in 1860, this is an old-fashioned cabaret with live songs, music and humorous skits in a pub-like setting, a place where Braque, Modigliani and Picasso used to hang out. Jazz lovers should head to Duc des Lombards.

For the most elegant shopping stroll down the Faubourg St. Honoré, not far from the Louvre, offering the best and most current fashions Parisian designers. Stop for a light lunch in one of the precious little designer cafes. The French have a very amusing slang expression for “window shopping,” they call it “Leche Vitrine” which literally means, “Window Licking”.

Air France has the most daily non-stop flights to Paris. One of the very best International airlines, Air France serves delicious French food to help get you into a Paris frame of mind. Check google.com/flights for the lowest fares for dates you're considering.

Once your plans for Paris are set, I suggest you download a French language App on your iPhone and start practicing. Rent some Netflix French movies with English subtitles. Go to some French restaurants and be sure to order in French. Then upon your return, just like Rick, in Casablanca, you'll be able to say to your significant other, “We'll always have Paris”. Bon voyage.



Le BHV Marais Photo © Paris Tourism Office / Thierry Danile



Été en Pente Douce Rue Paul-Albert Montmartre - Sacré-Coeur 18 arrondissement Paris, France Photo © Paris Tourism Office / Amélie DuPont



Quayside Second Hand Bookshop Photo © Paris Tourism Office / Marc Bertrand