

## **Paris may be the most visited city in the world, yet it's also one of the most expensive.**

"This city is worth the price," "If you avoid expensive neighborhoods like this one - you'll do alright. But the key is to plan ahead."

For travelers on a budget, the choices can be tough: stay in a far-flung suburb and eat a baguette for every meal, or leave happy but broke. Yet for those in the know, there are plenty of cheap - and even free - ways to enjoy the city.

### **The Sights:**

The Eiffel Tower may be impossible to miss for any self-respecting tourist, but it costs \$19 to reach the top and long lines leave you exhausted by the time you reach the celebrated view.

Instead, do as the Parisians do: come in the evening, pack a picnic, and sit on the sprawling lawns surrounding it to watch the sunset and admire the tower alight at night, sparkling every hour for 10 minutes.

For a great view of Paris, just hike up to the top of Montmartre and sit on the Sacre-Coeur Basilica's steps overlooking the city.

### **The Museums:**

Unless you plan on spending most of your time in museums - which, granted, is possible among the dozens of great museums in Paris - the museum passes (two, four or six days) may not save you much. Better compare prices first at [Paris Museum Pass](#).

Try to time your visit to include the first Sunday of the month, when the Louvre and all the major museums are free. And students, always have your ID card on you.

Don't discount a couple of smaller free museums. Le Musee Carnavalet has lots to offer: located in the gorgeous Marais neighborhood, it retraces Paris' rich history, from the Revolution to today. Meanwhile the Petit Palais, an architectural beauty in the heart of Paris, shows off collections from Paris in the 1900s all the way back to antiquity.

For photography fans, the gates surrounding the Luxembourg gardens host free open-air exhibits featuring stunning large-scale photography from around the world. And don't forget to go into the park, where Parisians hang out by the fountain, get a tan, and listen to free music on summer weekends.

### **The Sounds:**

Paris boasts not one, but two, world-class opera houses. Good seating remains prohibitively expensive, but if you reserve early and don't mind craning your neck a bit, there are seats for \$11 and \$16. For the under-28 crowd, last-minute tickets sometimes for coveted seats can also reach low prices. These are sold 15 minutes before the start of the show. The Opera Bastille reserves 62 standing-room tickets at \$8, on sale as soon as doors open, generally 90 minutes before starting time.

And for a musical Notre Dame, drop in on Sunday afternoon starting at 4:30 p.m., when free organ concerts bring out the cathedral's sacred atmosphere.

### **The Wandering:**

The cheapest and most satisfying way to see the city is on your own. A year ago, Paris debuted an extensive system of rental bikes that you can help yourself to for just \$1.50, credit card only, a day at numerous spots all over town. Velib', as they are called, are a great way to wander around the city independently. However Paris traffic can get pretty hairy, and the bikes don't come with helmets, so stay alert.

If cycling isn't your thing, hop on a bus and see where it goes. Weekly passes, which also work on the metro, are well worth investing in. Some scenic bus lines include numbers 24 (goes by the Seine, the Louvre, Notre Dame, several bridges, the Eiffel Tower, the Champs-Elysees) and 30 (the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, the Champs-Elysees, the Moulin Rouge, Sacre Coeur).

And there is always the Seine River. Try the Batobus - it's \$19, but unlike other flyboats its tickets are good for a whole day, and you can hop on and off with ease at eight top sightseeing spots.

## **The Food:**

Food and drink are tricky to budget for in cuisine capital Paris, but if you stray away from touristy streets, there are cheap eats to be had.

For typically French food, no need to go to expensive restaurants, either. Try Le Bouillon Chartier (7 rue du Faubourg Montmartre, metro Grands Boulevards), not just for its stunning art deco interior but for its simple, affordable fare. Or pick up a traditional French picnic at La Cantine de Quentin (52 rue Bichat, metro Goncourt), and walk over to the lovely Saint Martin Canal.

Try street food in the atmospheric Latin Quarter, or fixed-price lunch menus, cheaper than their dinnertime counterparts.

For gourmet ice cream with a view, try Berthillon, at the tip of the Ile Saint Louis, a little island in the middle of the Seine.

Or peruse Paris' traditional outdoor markets. One of the best and least expensive is the Belleville market, between Avenue de Menilmontant and Avenue de la Villette, on Tuesdays and Fridays.

## **The Room:**

If you're staying for a week or even just a few days, short-term rentals found on [Craigslist](#) can be a lot cheaper than hotels. For an intermediary and a bit more peace of mind, the one-woman company [Alcove & Agaves](#) will set you up in lovely Parisian homes.

If you can afford to, avoid budget hotels or rentals in the suburbs of Paris, as you'll waste too much time on transportation. Lastly, if you find a place so cheap it doesn't come with an Internet connection, take heart: there are free Wi-Fi spots all over Paris, including in many public parks - check out [Paris WiFi](#).