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Tips for an easy Paris stay...

1 - Passports and Visas

All U.S. citizens planning a French travel vacation need a valid passport to enter the country. Visas are not required for Americans staying fewer than 90 days. Travelers must carry some form of identification at all times. The U.S. Consulate in Paris is located at 2 rue St-Florentin, telephone 08.36.70.14.88.

2 - Jetlag

The most effective way to combat jet lag while in flight is to treat your body well. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of nonalcoholic, non-caffeinated fluids. Don't be afraid to ask your flight attendant for extra water.

You should set your watch to the local time of your destination as you board, and sleep according to that. This helps your body to start the change in its body clock.

Upon arrival in Paris, do your best to follow local time. Try to force yourself to stay awake until your normal bedtime, but make it an early night.

3 - Paris Weather

Paris has a temperate climate with warm summers and cold winters. There is a marked difference between the seasons but extreme hot or cold temperatures are rare.

Rainfall is moderate and steady year round. The city is known for its sudden rain showers, although its annual rainfall is low compared with other regions in . Even if it is impossible to truly predict weather conditions, it's safe to assume that July and August will be warm. May, June, September and October are the best months to visit as the weather is usually milder.

4 - Buses and Metros

Forget about taxis, you will discover a lot more on foot. The Metro (the subway) is excellent when you need to go from one arrondissement to another. There is simply no better way to get around Paris.

Ticket t is currently priced at €1,60 for a single ticket (as of July 2008). A package of 10 tickets, a carnet ["car-nay"] costs €11,40.

For more information, check the RATP (public transportation system in Paris) [website](#).

5 - Banks and ATM

Most banks are closed on week-ends and holidays. In Paris, banks opening hours are generally from 9:00 A.M. to 12:30 P.M., and then again from 1:30 P.M. to 4:30 P.M.

You will find ATM machines along many streets which will enable you to easily obtain cash with a bank ATM card.

In order to use your ATM card at a French bank, you must use your 4 digits PIN number. Check with your Bank that your ATM card is authorized for international use, and that you know which account is your primary account, since the French ATM will automatically debit your primary account.

Visa, Amex and Discover Cards are widely accepted in French shops and restaurants.

6 - Business Hours

Most stores are generally open in the morning from 9 A.M. Some close for lunch. They reopen at 2:00 P.M., and then close for the night at 7:00 P.M. or 8 P.M.

Don't forget that shops and restaurants can be closed on Sunday and Monday.

7 - Restaurants

As a general rule, Parisians go for lunch between midday and 1.30pm and dine between 8pm and 10.30pm. At other times, you'll always be able to find a snack in most cafés and "brasseries". If the restaurant has a sign saying "service continu", this indicates that you can have a meal at any time of day. The majority of bars and cafés open early, around 7 or 8 am and close around 10pm, or later if the establishment has a special dispensation.

In France all prices include service and taxes. However, if the waiter or waitress has been especially attentive, you can leave him or her a tip to show your appreciation. Around 5 to 10% of the bill is usual.

8 - Shopping

Most shops take all the major credit cards: Visa, EuroCard, MasterCard, American Express. At each transaction, the sales person must give you a customer copy of the receipt that you should keep safely.

Only checks drawn on French banks will be accepted.

Paying in cash is also an option, but it is best to avoid the larger denomination banknotes (over 100 Euros).

9 - Cleaning / Laundry

Most of our apartments are equipped with a washing machine (please check with us), but laundromats are available in many places.

Washing machines in France are smaller and more energy efficient than those in the U.S. The cycles take longer, (up to 1½ -2 hours!) so don't be in a hurry. In addition, be aware that the temperatures listed on the panel are in Centigrade. We recommend selecting a temperature under 40 degrees.

10 - Internet / Telephone

Most public telephones are equipped for calling cards and some telephones will take a variety of credit cards. Calling cards can be purchased in train stations, airports, post offices, and news stands.

Cellular phones are as prevalent in Europe as they are in the United States. France is on the GSM system. You can arrange for the rental of a GSM-compatible cellular phone from the U.S. Please note that the average cellular phone available in the U.S. is not GSM-compatible.

If you're taking a laptop computer with the intention of receiving/sending email, it's a good idea to research your options with your ISP before you leave the U.S.

11 - Electric Power

Keep in mind that Electric power in France is supplied as 220 volts. Most electrical appliances made for travel are compact, easy to pack and have a 110/220 volt switch. This is very convenient as it removes the necessity of a voltage adaptor. If you have an electrical appliance that does not have this 110/220 volt switch, then you must use a voltage adaptor. You can find some at RadioShack shops or similar shops.

There are certain exceptions, such as Digital cameras, cell phones or laptop computers. Because they run on DC battery power, the charging cord can be plugged directly into the wall, using just a plug adaptor. Before you go, read your owner's manual or contact the manufacturer website for instructions.

12 - Cultural and entertainment city guide

Pick up a Pariscope at any kiosk while you're in the City of Lights. The price is very reasonable at 0.4 Euros. This weekly magazine tells you everything that's happening in Paris for the week. It comes out every Wednesday and lists restaurants, art exhibits, theatres, clubs, cinemas, concerts, Paris by night, and much more. Prices and times for all events are also included.

13 - Museums and monuments

As a rule, museums are open from 9 or 10am until 5 or 6pm. Others open later and close at 8 or 9pm. Closing day is most usually Monday or Tuesday, with a few exceptions. Some are even open 7 days a week, such as some of the major monuments which can even be visited as late as 11pm or midnight.

Opening times tend to be longer during high season, sometimes from April to October or from May to September, or simply in July and August. Don't forget too that on public holidays – in particular, 1 January, 1 May and 25 December – many museums and monuments are closed. It's a good idea to check beforehand.

You should consider purchasing the Museum and Monument pass for 1, 3 or 5 days, valid to visit 70 museums and monuments in Paris and the Ile de France region. It gives you free and priority access for permanent collections in the museums and monuments; saves you time: no need to queue; allows unlimited number of visits during the chosen period. The museum and monument pass is on sale in the principal metro stations (this is card is not a transport pass), in the Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau, in the FNAC stores. You can check its [website](#)

- Eiffel Tower

Visiting the Eiffel Tower is a must but the lines and crowds can get very long. If you must see the lights of Paris at night (and you should), go on a week night (not Friday), you can check the official Eiffel Tower website for updated infos on bookings and opening hours [here](#)

- Le Louvre

To avoid queuing at the pyramid or ticket windows, it is a good option to buy your ticket in advance. The ticket is valid every day except Tuesday (when the museum is closed), and certain bank holidays. You can purchase your ticket online and also check online for special exhibitions and updated opening hours on the official Louvre [Museum website](#)

- Notre Dame de Paris

If you like looking at the inside of churches, don't miss Notre-Dame. If you have a problem with crowds, don't go on the weekend. People are usually pretty respectful inside the cathedral on the weekdays, but there are a lot of people on the weekends and it gets noisy inside. The best time to visit Notre Dame is early in the morning, just after you've enjoyed your warm daily croissant...

You can also check the Cathedral official [website](#) for an updated event calendar (don't miss an Organ representation!)

14 - More advice?

Do not hesitate to contact us directly for special advice on our favorite restaurants, shops, bakeries and places to visit. We can make any reservation and travel arrangement for you.

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