# The Best of Paris from \$90 a Day

Paris is a city of dreams. Its name calls up a parade of images and associations: the Eiffel Tower, the moonlit quais of the Seine, artists, accordions, and clouds of cigarette smoke. What's surprising is how well the city lives up to its mythic reputation. Though you won't see Gene Kelly dancing in the streets or run into Leslie Caron at the supermarket, you might actually hear an accordion playing as you stroll through a quiet market square, or see a rainbow arching over Parisian rooftops. The splendid Belle Epoque architecture still surrounds you; around every corner there seems to be yet another photo to be taken or poem to write. Yet Paris is not a museum. Underneath its velvet gown, it is a vibrant, modern city with its share of problems and annoyances. Still, if you squint your eyes on a rainy night, you might catch a glimpse of the Paris Brassaï photographed decades ago—a mysterious and lovely realm of the imagination.

Fortunately, this particular dream is not limited to pashas with bulging bank accounts. Though Paris is notoriously expensive, a little digging will reveal a healthy supply of reasonable hotels and restaurants. If you are willing to venture into street markets and public transportation, you can cut costs dramatically while getting a little closer to the Parisian's everyday life.

Many of the most impressive sights are free: the majestic sweep of the Champs-Elysées, the quiet grandeur of the place des Vosges, or the leisurely charm of the Jardin du Luxembourg. The city's magnificent churches are all free; it won't cost anything to spend an hour beneath the vaulted arches of Notre-Dame. Paris has dozens of affordable museums, from the mighty Louvre to the tiny doll museum, Musée de la Poupée. Choose your itinerary according to your interests. There's so much to see; don't try to do it all. Who cares if you see 35 museums or 13? Take time to sip an espresso or a glass of red wine at an outdoor cafe under the Parisian sky, and allow yourself to get lost down some ancient street where you'll find the ghost of Balzac, the flash of Yves St-Laurent, and cuisine of Alain Ducasse sharing the same sidewalk view.

Paris seduces. Her charm is effusive, yet she wields her power with an iron determination. From the place de la Concorde to the Opera Garnier to the basilica of Sacré-Coeur, she is a living work of art and, like all artists, can be decidedly temperamental. But you won't mind—you'll even understand—when you sip from her cup, break bread, and fall in love all over again.

### 1 Frommer's Favorite Affordable Experiences

 Taking an Evening Cruise on the Seine. Touristy, but it doesn't matter. The monuments that are impressive by day are floodlit at night, and Paris becomes glittering and romantically shadowy by turns. Gliding down the river under softly glowing bridges, with the towers of Notre-Dame against a dark sky and the Eiffel Tower transformed into a golden web of light, is a magical experience—until, that is, some visitors decide that shouting and doing the wave under each bridge is the best way to assert one's nationality. Word of advice: Save the displays for sporting events. For more information, see chapter 6.

- Spending a Day at the Musée d'Orsay. It holds the world's most comprehensive collection of Impressionist art, in addition to Pre-Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, and Neo-Impressionists. See the sculptures on the ground floor, and then head upstairs for a look at the spectacular collection of van Goghs, some little-known Gauguins, and a roomful of Toulouse-Lautrec pastels. You'll leave refreshed and energized. See chapter 6.
- Whiling Away a Weekend Afternoon in the Jardin du Luxembourg. Enjoy the sun on your face while you lean back in an iron chair and watch neatly dressed, perfectly mannered Parisians of all ages sail toy boats, play tennis, ride ponies, and take beekeeping classes. Don't miss the working orchards, where fruit is carefully cultivated for the table of the French Senate and for local charities. See chapter 6.
- Walking Through the Marais. Sprawling manors built by 17th-century nobles and narrow streets of fairy-tale quaintness coexist with artists and artisans who bring unique and sometimes whimsical style to the historic district. Stroll down rue des Rosiers in the heart of the old Jewish quarter, browse the antiques shops at Village St-Paul, and take a break in the tranquil place des Vosges. The bars and cafes on the main streets are

lively at night and during the annual Fierté (gay pride) celebration; the side streets are so quiet, you can hear your footsteps echo in the dark. See chapter 6.

- Tomb-Hopping in Père-Lachaise. From Chopin to Jim Morrison to Maria Callas, this lush necropolis is a Who Used to Be Who of famous Parisians (or famous people who happened to die in Paris), and there's no wrong season or weather to visit. The bare trees of winter lend it a haunting quality; on rainy days, the cemetery is brooding and melancholy; on a summer day, it's the ideal place for a contemplative stroll. Best time to visit? November 1, All Saints' Day, when flowers decorate the tombs. See chapter 6.
- Food Shopping, Parisian Style. In an outdoor neighborhood market, you can observe the French indulging their passion for meat, dairy, fruit, fish, fowl, pâté, cheese, sausage, rabbit, and unusual animal parts: brains, kidneys, veal's head, tongue, and tripe. The merchants know their products and are happy to offer advice and even cooking tips. The markets on rue Mouffetard and rue de Buci are the best known; the ones on rue Montorgueil and rue Cler have an equally tempting array of produce and are less touristy. See chapter 6.
- Touring the Arcades. You'll feel that shopping has been elevated to high art when you wander the iron- and glass-covered passages that weave through the 2e arrondissement. Designed to shelter 19th-century shoppers from nasty weather, they now hold shops that sell stamps, old books, and discount clothing; designer boutiques; tea salons; homey brasseries; and even a wax museum

(Grévin). Exploring these picturesque passages is a delightful way to while away a rainy afternoon. See chapter 6.

- Watching the Sunset from the Pont des Arts. Behind you are the spires of Notre-Dame; ahead is the river, with its bridges stretching toward the setting sun. On the bridge with you just might be a mime or someone dressed as a Louvre statue. See chapter 6.
- Arriving in August. It's a month when the city is shunned by tourists, abandoned by its residents. Even parking meters are free. The air begins to smell like air again, nightlife takes it down a notch, and parks and gardens are in full bloom. Although many restaurants close, enough remain open to give you a good choice of the local cuisine. And there are the museums, the banks of the Seine, and the old neighborhoods. Without the bustle, what's left is beauty, art, and nature.

Although summers in Paris rarely reach the temperatures of more southern climes, 2003 proved to be the exception with an unprecedented heat wave. While the city government responded by creating an artificial beach, the high temperatures led to a number of heat-related fatalities. Airconditioning is not a given in even

- the more *luxe* hotels, so keep that in mind when you're thinking about booking a late-summer vacation.
- Strolling, Inline Skating, or Biking Along the Canal St-Martin. Immortalized in the Marcel Carné film *Hôtel du Nord*, the canal runs through eastern Paris, a part of the city tourists rarely visit, which is a pity. The area closes to vehicle traffic on Sunday, and you can bike, faire le roller (skate), or scooter past footbridges connecting the tree-lined promenades on either side of the water. You'll see elderly men dozing in the sun as mothers watch their toddlers play. You might even take in a "spectacle" such as costumed actors evoking a Venetian scene on a line of boats floating past the quartier. The whole area relives the low-key tranquillity of prewar, workingclass Paris.
- Dancing in the Streets. On June 21, the day of the summer solstice, everyone pours into the streets to celebrate the Fête de la Musique, and musicians are everywhere. Although the quality varies from don't-give-up-your-day-job to top-rung, it's exhilarating to join the parties in progress in every park, garden, and square. See "Paris Calendar of Events," in chapter 2.

# 2 Best Affordable Hotel Bets

- Best for Business Travelers: Ideally situated near one of the city's main business districts, the Hôtel Keppler, 12 rue Keppler, 16e (© 01-47-20-65-05), is a quiet, well-run hotel with a lot of amenities for the money. Its good address will impress your French business associates and show them that you're *malin* (shrewd). See p. 88.
- Best for Romantic Atmosphere:
  A short stroll from the Eiffel

Tower, the Hôtel du Champ de Mars, 7 rue du Champ de Mars, 7e (© 01-45-51-52-30), feels more like a luxury boutique hotel than a budget choice. Flowing curtains, fabric-covered headboards, throw pillows, and cushioned high-backed seats make each room ideal for a lazy breakfast in bed. With its 18th-century ceiling murals and wedding cake plasterwork, Hôtel St-Jacques, 35

rue des Ecoles, 5e (© 01-44-07-45-45), offers Second Empire romance at affordable rates. See p. 100 and p. 95.

- Best for Families: Spacious doubles with connecting doors can be found at Hôtel Vivienne, 40 rue Vivienne, 2e (© 01-42-33-13-26), which also features cribs and family-friendly management. See p. 83.
- Best Overall Values: On the Right Bank, Hôtel Little Regina, 89 bd. de Strasbourg, 9e (© 01-45-51-52-30), near two of the city's train stations, offers incredible deals on spacious, recently renovated, and soundproofed rooms that come with new rugs and furniture, attractive burgundy wallpaper, ample wardrobe space, full-length mirrors, white-oak desks, and brand new bathrooms with shower doors. On the Left Bank, The Grand Hôtel Lévêque, 29 rue Cler, 7e (© 01-47-05-49-15), boasts a fantastic location on a pedestrian-only street, steps from one of the most charming open-air markets in the city. The clean, well-maintained rooms are soundproofed and come with new airconditioning units; rooms on the fifth floor have balconies with views of the Eiffel Tower. See p. 84 and p. 99.
- Best Location: Steps from the Ritz, Hôtel Mansart, 5 rue des Capucines, 1e (© 01-42-61-50-28), is located in the heart of the city, just off place de la Vendôme. From here, you are only a 10-minute walk from the Louvre, the

Opéra, the Concorde, and the Left Bank. See p. 81.

- Best for Travelers with Disabilities: Little Hôtel, 3 rue Pierre Chausson, 10e (© 01-42-08-21-57), is one of the only budget hotels in Paris to offer wheelchairaccessible rooms on the ground floor. The hotel is conveniently located near the Gare de l'Est and the Canal St-Martin. See p. 84.
- Best for Flights of Fancy: The stone walls, colorful fabrics, and wacky bed curtains at the Hôtel du Globe, 15 rue des Quatre Vents, 6e (© 01-46-33-62-69), will make you think you're living in a comic book, but, in fact, the sleek St-Germain neighborhood is just outside the window. See p. 97.
- Best Rooms with a View: Would you like to gaze over the city's rooftops while you have your morning croissants and coffee? Splurge on a room with a view at the Hôtel du Square d'Anvers, 6 place d'Anvers, 9e (@ 01-42-81-20-74), overlooking a leafy park. From its top-floor rooms, you have a view that stretches from the Eiffel Tower to Sacré-Coeur. Up the hill, Hôtel Regyn's Montmartre, 18 place des Abbesses, 18e (**② 01-**42-54-45-21), charges a little extra for the view from its fourth and fifth floors-and it's entirely worth it. See p. 83 and p. 90.
- Best Splurge: The Hôtel du Bois, 11 rue du Dome, 16e (© 01-45-00-31-96), has it all: a fantastic location just off elegant boulevard Victor Hugo, handsome rooms (with Laura Ashley

### **Impressions**

Paris is a real ocean. Wander through it, describe it as you may, there will always remain an undiscovered place, an unknown retreat, flowers, pearls, monsters, something unheard of.

—Honoré de Balzac

fabric, marble bathrooms, cable TV, and hair dryers), peace and quiet, and a friendly staff. It's popular with the French when they come to the capital to enjoy a dose of metropolitan life. See p. 90.

- Best Youth Hostel: In a historic mansion on a quiet side street in the Marais, Youth Hostel le Fauconnier, 17 rue de Fauconnier, 4e (© 01-42-74-23-45), has a pleasant courtyard, and all rooms have private showers! Reserve well in advance. See p. 104.
- Best for Nightlife Lovers: Hôtel Beaumarchais, 3 rue Oberkampf, 11e (© 01-53-36-86-86), is within walking distance of the city's three nightlife centers—the Bastille, the Marais, and rue Oberkampf. Air-conditioning and double-glazed windows allow you to sleep late, and the bold color scheme will give you a jolt of energy in the morning. See p. 85.
- Best for a Taste of the Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie: The Hôtel Nicolo, 3 rue Nicolo, 16e (© 01-42-88-83-40), is in the heart of one of Paris's most expensive residential districts. If you'd like to live in gilded surroundings, even on a budget, you might enjoy the hotel's traditional French charm. See p. 88.

• Best for Serious Shoppers: The Hôtel Chopin, 10 bd. Montmartre, 9e (© 01-47-70-58-10), is tucked away in the Passage Jouffroy shopping arcade. Across the street is the Passage des Panoramas; Galeries Lafayette, Au Printemps, and other department stores are only a short walk away. See p. 82.

The Hôtel Londres Saint-Honoré, 13, rue Saint Roch, 1e (© 01-42-15-62-60), is a few steps off the most elegant shopping street in Paris, rue Saint Honoré. Here you'll find boutique after boutique packed with the latest fashions. See p. 80.

• Best Family-Run Hotels: The very friendly and hard-working Eric and Sylvie Gaucheron own and run two hotels side by side, both highly recommended. The **Familia Hôtel,** 11 rue des Ecoles, 5e (**© 01-43-54-55-27**), and the Hôtel Minerve, 13 rue des Ecoles, 5e (© 01-43-26-26-04), are both excellent values and boast comfortable, lovingly maintained accommodations, some with hand-painted sepia frescoes and others with exposed beams and tiny balconies with views of Notre Dame. See p. 92 and p. 95.

## 3 Best Affordable Restaurant Bets

- Best Restaurant with a View: In good weather, you'll have one of the loveliest views in Paris from an outdoor table at the Restaurant du Palais-Royal, 43 rue Valois, 1er (© 01-40-20-00-27). The restaurant is in the Palais-Royal, so you'll overlook its beautiful, peaceful gardens while dining on fine dishes like grilled sole with a garnish of carrots, parsley, red pepper, and baby squid. See p. 118.
- Best Cafes with a View: Under the arcades, and facing the lovely place

des Vosges with its shady chestnut trees, the **Café Hugo**, 22 place des Vosges, 4e (© **01-42-72-64-04**), is a great place to while away a summer afternoon. See p. 144.

Closer to the hubbub, chic Café Marly, 93 rue de Rivoli, cour Napoléon du Louvre, 1er (© 01-49-26-06-60), overlooks I. M. Pei's glass pyramid at the Louvre and has ultracushy chairs for sitting back and contemplating architecture, art and life. See p. 144.

• Best Places for a Celebration: If you want a glamorous night on the town, try the infinitely elegant La Butte Chaillot, 110 bis av. Keleber, 16e (© 01-47-27-88-88), with its polished glass and leather interior, and exquisitely prepared dishes that are fresh, simple, and utterly delectable. See p. 126.

For something just as chic but a bit more trendy, head to **Georges**, Centre Pompidou, 6th Floor, rue Rambuteau, 4e (© **01-44-78-47-99**). This creation of the Costes Brothers (of Hotel Costes) is one of the hottest spots in Paris, with a 360-degree view to kill—and its prices are surprisingly reasonable. See p. 121.

- Most Typical Parisian Bistro: Every Parisian has his or her pick, but almost everyone agrees that Chardenoux, 1 rue Jules-Valles, 11e (© 01-43-71-49-52), belongs in the top 10. It's a small place in an out-of-the-way location, but the food is excellent and the Art Nouveau setting is gloriously, eternally Parisian. See p. 124.
- Best Modern Bistro: You'll have to book the minute you get to town if you want to sample the food at the almost hopelessly popular Chez Casimir, 6 rue de Belzunce, 10e (© 01-48-78-28-80). It's worth the trip to this treasure close to the Gare du Nord, where you'll find traditional French cuisine with a twist in an animated setting. See p. 118.
- Best for Business Meals: Bofinger, 5–7 rue de la Bastille, 4e (© 01-42-72-87-82). It's one of the prettiest restaurants in Paris, with a gorgeous domed stained-glass ceiling over the main dining room. It became part of the Brasserie Flo chain in 1996, and the food has never been better. See p. 121.

- Best Brasserie: For a taste of the real thing, go to Brasserie Ile St-Louis, 55 quai de Bourbon, 1er (© 01-43-54-02-59), the last independent brasserie in Paris. Far from the polished restaurants that masquerade as true brasseries, this one has as its heart old Paris. See p. 112.
- Best Place for a Late-Night Meal: You can always wander into one of the all-night brasseries along rue Coquillière (on the northern edge of Les Halles) without a reservation. For a Parisian experience with a splash of American literary history, head to Closerie des Lilas, 171 bd. du Montparnasse, 6e (© 01-40-51-**34-50**). Ernest Hemingway wrote The Sun Also Rises here, and in his off time he hung out here with John Dos Passos. You'll need reservations. For a change of pace, try the bustling, bawdy La Tour de **Montlhéry,** 5 rue des Prouvaires, ler (© 01-42-36-21-82), open nonstop from 7am Monday to 7am Saturday. It's known for huge cuts of excellent meat and good house wines. Reservations are always required. See p. 138 and p. 117.
- Best for Mingling with the Locals: Parisians are avid bargainhunters, which explains the huge popularity of moderately priced eateries. On the Right Bank, near the Concorde and the U.S. consulate, L'Escure, 7 rue de Mondovi, le ( 01-42-60-18-91), pulls in many of the local businesspeople at lunch and residents at dinner. On the Left Bank, Bistro Mazarin, 42 rue Mazarin, 6e ( 01-43-29-99-01), attracts many locals associated with the shops or universities around the neighborhood; portions are large and prices are fair, and there's a

- terrace for outdoor dining. See. p. 116 and p. 136.
- Best for Celebrity Spotting: Most recently, John Malkovich and Tom Hanks were spotted; years ago, it was Marlene Dietrich and Jackie Kennedy. Le Relais Plaza, 25 av. Montaigne, 8e (© 01-53-67-66-65), at the venerable Hotel Plaza Athenée, has reopened and regained its place as the most starstudded and (somewhat) affordable eatery. See p. 127.
- Best Breakfast: The day sometimes starts with mealy croissants and watery coffee in budget accommodations; if you make the effort to come here, you'll wish that Angelina, 226 rue de Rivoli, 1er (© 01-42-60-82-00), was next door to your hotel. This Belle Epoque palace with gold-trimmed mirrors serves delectable buttery pastries and hot chocolate you'll never forget. See p. 148.
- Best Afternoon Tea: For a delightful timeout during an ambitious day of sightseeing, head to Mariage Frères, 30–32 rue du Bourg-Tibourg, 4e (© 01-42-72-28-11). The Mariage family entered the trade in 1660, when Nicolas Mariage began importing tea from Persia for King Louis XIV. Take your pick from almost 500 teas in the attractive colonial-style salon at the back of the shop. See p. 149.
- Best Sandwiches: Italy is the inspiration for the focaccia-style bread and scrumptious fillings at Cosi, 54 rue de Seine, 6e (© 01-46-33-35-36). To accompany the freshly baked bread, you can choose from an assortment of specialties, including arugula, mozzarella, Parmesan, Italian ham, roast tomatoes, and tapenade. See p. 137.
- Best Picnic Fare: Two excellent places for one-stop shopping are La

- Grande Epicerie, Bon Marché, 38 rue de Sèvres, 7e (© 01-44-39-81-00); and Lafayette Gourmet, 52 bd. Haussmann, 9e (© 01-48-74-46-06). The quiche from the Grande Epicerie Alsatian deli counter is a special treat. See p. 247.
- Best Spot for a Family Meal: The polite and efficient waiters at Le Grand Colbert, 2–4 rue Vivienne, 2e (© 01-42-86-87-88), are used to Parisian family gatherings, especially on Sunday. This historic landmark dates back to the 1830s and shimmers with polished brass, old lamps, and frescoes. It's boisterous and lively, and children get to be a bit loud without upsetting the convivial atmosphere. See p. 119.
- Best Wine Bar: For excellent Rhône Valley wines and generous plates of cold cuts and cheese in a lively little dining room, visit A la Cloche des Halles, 28 rue Coquillière, 1er (© 01-42-36-93-89). Cloche means "bell," and the name refers to the bell that tolled the opening and closing of the city's main market when it was nearby. Some old-market atmosphere survives here, including an interesting mix of people and a high level of conviviality. It's a great place for a light, very French lunch. See p. 150.
- Best Cafe Food: Although cafes all over town serve salads and omelets, the staff makes an extra effort at La Chaise au Plafond, 10 rue Trésor, 4e (© 01-42-76-03-22), on a side street in the heart of the Marais. The offbeat decor—park benches and a ceiling painted black and white to resemble the markings on a cow—attracts a young crowd that delights in the big, fresh salads and thick *tartes*. See p. 146.

- Best Foreign Meals: A meal at Le Manguier, 67 av. Parmentier, 11e (© 01-48-07-03-27), might be the only chance you'll ever have to try West African cooking. Among the better dishes are chicken yassa with lemons and onions, and requin fumé (smoked shark), if you're feeling adventurous. This lively place also serves potent, mostly rum-based cocktails and plays African music. At Al Diwan, 30 av. Georges V, 8e (© 01-47-20-18-17), you can sample delicious, fresh, and affordable Lebanese cuisine just off the Champs-Elysées. See p. 131 and p. 125.
- Best Student Hangout: Parisian students have a keen eye for bargains, skimping on food so they can spend their parents' money in salsa bars. At Restaurant Perraudin, 157 rue St-Jacques, 5e (© 01-46-33-15-75), in the heart of the Latin Quarter, students and professors get comfortable home cooking at rock-bottom prices. The 18€ (\$21) lunch menu is hearty enough to see them through an afternoon of classes and an evening of carousing. See p. 135.
- Best French Regional Restaurants: Regional cooking has been enjoying a new vogue in Paris. Two of the best places to dine in the provinces without leaving town are: ChantAirelle, 17 rue Laplace, 5e (© 01-46-33-18-59), to sample the sturdy fare of the south-central Auvergne region; and Vivario, 6 rue Cochin, 5e (© 01-43-25-08-19), the oldest Corsican restaurant in Paris, which serves hearty specialties from Napoléon's birthplace. See p. 136 and p. 135.
- Best Deals: The 20€ (\$23) threecourse menu with wine at L'Es**cure** (see above) provides delicious French cuisine that you don't often see at this price. The tasty 12€ (\$14) two-course lunch menu at Cirio, 17 rue des Petits Champs, 1e (201-42-96-47-54), can't be beat. The 30€ (\$35) heavenly three-course gourmet menu at Le Clos du Gourmet, 16 av. Rapp, 7e (**②01-45-51-75-61**), will make you want to pinch yourself; no, you're not dreaming, these prices are real! See p. 116, p. 112, and p. 140.