

Planning Your Trip to Paris

Flying into France, if your documents are in order, is one of the most effortless undertakings in global travel. There are no shots to get, no particular safety precautions, no unusual aspects of planning a trip. With your passport, airline ticket, and enough money, you just go. In general, if you're not bringing any illegal items into France, Customs officials are courteous and will speed you on your way into their country.

Of course, before you lift off the ground in your native country, you can do some advance preparation, as will be detailed in this chapter. That could mean checking to see if your passport is up to date (or obtaining one if you don't already possess one) or taking care of health needs before you go, including medication. In the case of Paris, you might want to make reservations at some highly acclaimed restaurants or even buy tickets in advance to certain performances.

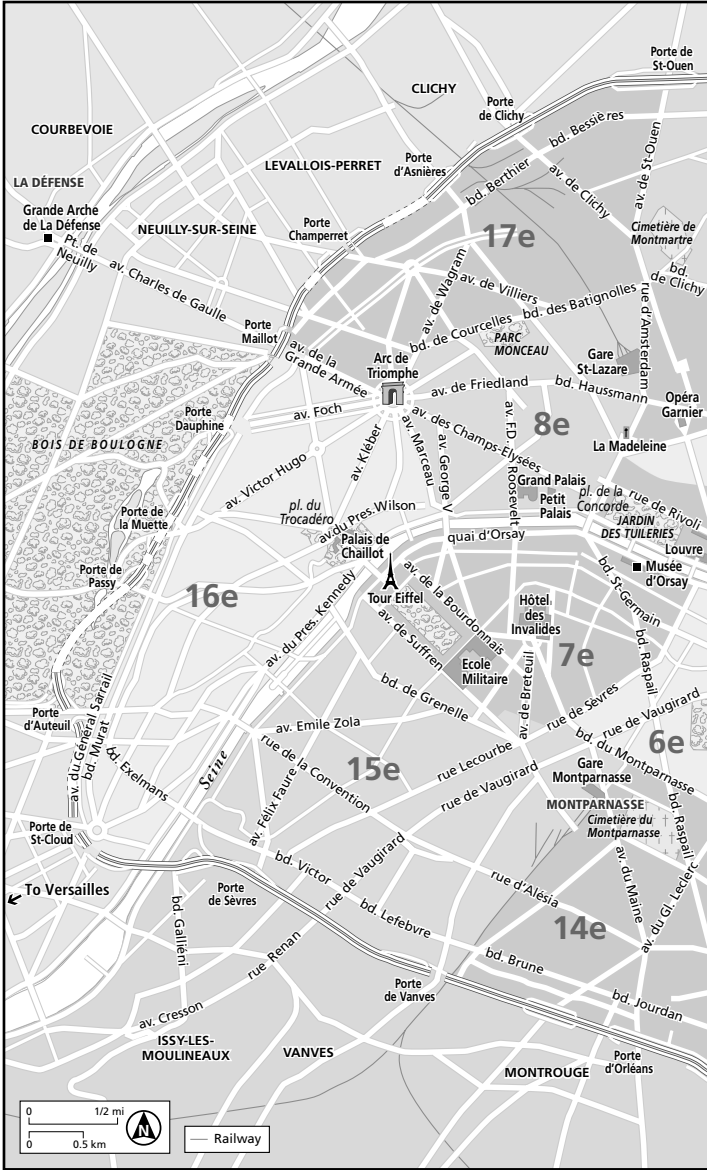
In the pages that follow, you'll find everything you need to know about the practicalities of planning your trip in advance: finding the best airfare, deciding when to go, figuring out the euro, and more.

1 Visitor Information

Before you go, your best source of information is the **French Government Tourist Office** (www.franceguide.com), which can be reached at the following addresses:

- **United States:** 825 Third Ave., 29th floor, New York, NY 10022 (☎ 514/288-1904); 205 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60601 (☎ 514/288-1904); or 9454 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 715, Beverly Hills, CA 90212 (☎ 514/288-1904).
- **Canada:** 1800 av. McGill College, Suite 490, Montreal, QC H3A 2W9 (☎ 514/288-2026; fax 514/845-4868).
- **United Kingdom:** 178 Piccadilly, London W1J 9AL (☎ 09068/244-123 [60p per min.]; fax 020/7493-6594).
- **Australia:** 25 Blight St., Sydney, NSW 2000 (☎ 02/9231-5244; fax 02/9221-8682).

Paris at a Glance



Although AAA has road maps of France, the best are *cartes routières* (road maps) published by Michelin. Both map books and fold-outs are available at almost any large bookstore in Paris and are sometimes available at news kiosks. These outlets also sell detailed street maps of Paris. The Michelin maps offer alternative *routes de dégagement*, which you can travel to skirt big cities and avoid traffic-clogged highways. We recommend the *France Tourist and Motoring Atlas* (No 20197).

The **Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau** (☎ 08-92-68-30-00; .35€ [50¢] per minute; www.paris-info.com) has offices throughout the city, with the main headquarters at 25–27 rue des Pyramides, 1er (Métro: Pyramides). It's open Monday to Saturday 10am to 7pm (June–Oct from 9am), Sunday and holidays from 11am to 7pm. Less comprehensive branch offices include Clémenceau Welcome Center, at the corner of av. Champs-Élysées and av. Marigny 8e; (Métro: Champs-Élysées), open April 6 to October 20 daily 9am to 7pm. **Espace Tourisme Ile-de-France** has branches in the Carrousel du Louvre, 99 rue de Rivoli, 1er (Métro: Palais-Royal–Louvre), open daily 10am to 6pm; in the **Gare de Lyon**, 20 bd. Diderot, 12e (Métro: Gare de Lyon), open Monday to Saturday 8am to 6pm; in the **Gare du Nord**, 18 rue de Dunkerque, 10e (Métro: Gare du Nord), open daily 8am to 6pm; and in **Montmartre**, 21 place du Tertre, 18e (Métro: Abbesses or Lamarck–Caulaincourt), open daily 10am to 7pm.

WEBSITES

The French Government Tourist Office's home on the Internet is at www.franceguide.com or www.francetourism.com. The website of the Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau, at www.paris-touristoffice.com or www.parisinfo.com, provides information on hotels, restaurants, attractions, entertainment, and events.

2 Entry Requirements

PASSPORTS

For information on how to get a passport, go to “Passports” in the Appendix—the websites listed provide downloadable passport applications as well as the current fees for processing passport applications. For an up-to-date, country-by-country listing of passport requirements around the world, go to the “Foreign Entry Requirement” Web page of the U.S. State Department at www.travel.state.gov.

It's always wise to have plenty of documentation when traveling with children. For changing details on entry requirements for children traveling abroad, keep up-to-date by going to the U.S. State Department website: <http://travel.state.gov/foreignentryreqs.html>.

Children of all ages (from birth up) require a passport. Visit **www.travel.state.gov** for a downloadable application; children ages 14 to 17 follow the same rules for a first-time passport applicant (see **www.travel.state.gov**).

To prevent international child abduction, E.U. governments have initiated procedures at entry and exit points. These often (but not always) include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parent or legal guardian not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, facilitates entries and exits. All children must have their own passport. To obtain a passport, the child *must* be present at the center issuing the passport. Both parents must be present as well. If not, then a notarized statement from the parents is required.

Any questions parents or guardians might have can be answered by calling the **National Passport Information Center** at ☎ 877/487-6868 Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm Eastern Standard Time.

CUSTOMS

What You Can Bring into France: Customs restrictions for visitors entering France differ for citizens of the European Union (E.U.) and of non-E.U. countries. Non-E.U. nationals can bring in either 200 cigarettes, 100 cigarillos, 50 cigars, or 250 grams of smoking tobacco, duty-free. This amount is doubled if you live outside Europe. You can also bring in 2 liters of wine and 1 liter of alcohol of more than 22%, or 2 liters of wine 22% or less. In addition, you can bring in 60cc of perfume, or a quarter liter of eau de toilette. Visitors ages 15 and older can bring in other goods totaling 175€ (\$254); for those younger than 15, the limit is 90€ (\$131). Customs officials tend to be lenient about general merchandise as the limits are very low. E.U. citizens can bring in any amount of goods as long as the goods are intended for their personal use and not for resale.

What You Can Take Home from France:

U.S. Citizens Returning U.S. citizens who have been away for 48 hours or more are allowed to bring back, once every 30 days, \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. You're charged a flat rate of duty on the next \$1,000 worth of purchases, and any dollar amount beyond that is subject to duty at whatever rates apply. On mailed gifts, the

duty-free limit is \$200. Have your receipts or purchases handy to expedite the declaration process. **Note:** If you owe duty, you are required to pay on your arrival into the United States, using cash, personal check, government or traveler's check, or money order; some locations also accept Visa or MasterCard.

To avoid having to pay duty on foreign-made personal items you owned before your trip, bring along a bill of sale, insurance policy, jeweler's appraisal, or receipt of purchase. Or you can register items that can be readily identified by a permanently affixed serial number or marking—think laptop computers, cameras, and CD players—with Customs before you leave. Take the items to the nearest Customs office, or register them with Customs at the airport from which you're departing. You'll receive, at no cost, a Certificate of Registration, which allows duty-free entry for the life of the item.

You cannot bring fresh foodstuffs into the U.S.; canned foods are allowed. For specifics on what you can bring back and the corresponding fees, download the invaluable free pamphlet *Know Before You Go* online at **www.cbp.gov**. (Click "Travel," and then click "Know Before You Go.") Or contact the **U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP)**, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20229 (☎ 877/287-8667) for the pamphlet.

Canadian Citizens Canada allows its citizens a C\$750 exemption, and you're allowed to bring back duty-free 1 carton of cigarettes, 1 can of tobacco, 40 imperial ounces of liquor, and 50 cigars. In addition, you're allowed to mail gifts to Canada from abroad valued at less than C\$60 a day, provided they're unsolicited and don't contain alcohol or tobacco (write on the package UNSOLICITED GIFT, UNDER C\$60 VALUE). All valuables, including serial numbers of valuables you already own, such as expensive foreign cameras, should be declared on the Y-38 form before departure from Canada. **Note:** The C\$750 exemption can be used only once a year and only after an absence of 7 days.

For a clear summary of Canadian rules, write for the booklet *I Declare*, issued by the **Canada Border Services Agency** (☎ 800/461-9999 in Canada, or 204/983-3500; www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca).

U.K. Citizens Citizens of the U.K. returning from an E.U. country such as France go through a Customs exit (called the "Blue Exit") especially for E.U. travelers. In essence, there is no limit on what you can bring back from an E.U. country, as long as the items are for personal use (this includes gifts) and you have already paid the duty and tax. However, Customs law sets out guidance levels. If you bring in

more than these levels, you may be asked to prove that the goods are for your own use. Guidance levels on goods bought in the E.U. for your own use are 3,200 cigarettes, 200 cigars, 400 cigarillos, 3 kilograms of smoking tobacco, 10 liters of spirits, 90 liters of wine, 20 liters of fortified wine (such as port or sherry), and 110 liters of beer.

For information, contact **HM revenue Customs** at ☎ **0845/010-9000** (from outside the U.K., 02920/501-261), or consult their website at www.hmrc.gov.uk.

Australian Citizens The duty-free allowance in Australia is A\$900 or, for those younger than 18, A\$450. Citizens can bring in 250 cigarettes or 250 grams of loose tobacco, and 2.25 liters of alcohol. If you're returning with valuables you already own, such as foreign-made cameras, you should file form B263.

A helpful brochure available from Australian consulates or Customs offices is *Know Before You Go*. For more information, call the **Australian Customs Service** at ☎ **1300/363-263**, or log on to www.customs.gov.au.

New Zealand Citizens The duty-free allowance for **New Zealand** is \$700. Citizens 17 and older can bring in 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars, or 250 grams of tobacco (or a mixture of all three if the combined weight doesn't exceed 250g), plus 4.5 liters of wine and beer, or 1.125 liters of liquor. New Zealand currency does not carry import or export restrictions. Fill out a certificate of export, listing the valuables you are taking out of the country; that way, you can bring them back without paying duty.

Most questions are answered in a free pamphlet available at New Zealand consulates and Customs offices: *New Zealand Customs Guide for Travellers, Notice no. 4*. For more information, contact **New Zealand Customs Service**, The Customhouse, 17–21 Whitmore St., Box 2218, Wellington (☎ **04/473-6099** or 0800/428-786; www.customs.govt.nz).

3 When to Go

The best time to visit Paris is in the spring (Apr–June) or fall (Sept–Nov), when things are easier to come by—from Métro seats to good-tempered waiters. The weather is temperate year-round. July and August are the worst for crowds. Parisians desert their city then.

Hotels used to charge off-season rates during the cold, rainy period from November through February; now, they're often packed with business travelers, trade fairs, and winter tour groups, and hoteliers have less incentive to offer discounts. Airfares are still cheaper

during these months, and more promotions are available. They rise in the spring and fall, peaking in the summer, when tickets cost the most.

In even-numbered years, don't come to Paris during the first 2 weeks of October without a confirmed hotel room. The weather's fine, but the city is jammed for the auto show.

4 Money & Costs

For decades Paris was known as one of the most expensive cities on earth. It still is a pricey destination, but London has not only caught up with Paris in prices but surpassed it. Because of the lower dollar value, New York appears to be a bargain to some visiting Parisians. Paris is not as expensive as Tokyo or Oslo, but even an average hotel can cost 140€ (\$200) or more—in many cases, much, much more.

It's always advisable to bring money in a variety of forms on a vacation: a mix of cash, credit cards, and traveler's checks. You should also exchange enough petty cash to cover airport incidentals, tipping, and transportation to your hotel before you leave home, or withdraw money upon arrival at an airport ATM.

In many international destinations, ATMs offer the best exchange rates. Avoid exchanging money at commercial exchange bureaus and hotels, which often have the highest transaction fees.

Not just Paris, but all of France is a very expensive destination. To compensate, you can often find top-value food and lodging. Part of the cost is the value-added tax (VAT in English, TVA in French), which adds between 6% and 33% to everything.

Rental cars (and fuel) are expensive, and flying within France costs more than within the U.S. Train travel is relatively inexpensive, especially with a rail pass.

CURRENCY

The **euro**, the single European currency, became the official currency of France and 11 other participating countries on January 1, 1999. The euro didn't go into general circulation until January 1, 2002. The old currency, the French franc, disappeared into history on March 1, 2002, replaced by the euro, which is officially abbreviated "EUR" or €. Exchange rates of participating countries are locked into a common currency fluctuating against the dollar, and the difference could affect the relative costs of your trip. For up-to-the-minute currency conversions, go to www.xe.com/ucc.

Most banks in Paris are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 4:30pm, and a few are open Saturday; ask at your hotel for the

location of the one nearest you. Most post offices will convert currency, and exchanges are also available at Paris airports and train stations and along most of the major boulevards. They charge a small commission. Some exchange places charge favorable rates to lure you into their stores. For example, **Paris Vision**, 214 rue de Rivoli, 1er (☎ 01-42-60-31-25; Métro: Tuileries), maintains a minibank in the back of a travel agency, open daily from 7am to 9pm. Its rates are only a fraction less favorable than those offered for large blocks of money as listed by the Paris stock exchange.

ATMs

The easiest and best way to get cash away from home is from an ATM, sometimes referred to as a “cash machine,” or a “cashpoint.” The **Cirrus** (☎ 800/424-7787; www.mastercard.com) and **PLUS** (☎ 800/843-7587; www.visa.com) networks span the globe; look at the back of your bank card to see which network you’re on, and then call or check online for ATM locations at your destination. Be sure you know your personal identification number (PIN) and daily withdrawal limit before you depart.

ATMs are widely available in France, certainly in all cities and bigger towns, and even at a bank or two in smaller places. But don’t always count on it. If you’re venturing into rural France, it’s always good to have euros in your pocket.

There are problems involved in the use of ATMs. For example, if you make a mistake and punch your secret code wrong into the machine three times, that machine will swallow your card on the assumption that it is being fraudulently used.

Users with alphabetical rather than numerical PINS may be thrown off by the lack of letters on French cash machines. If your PIN number is longer than four digits, check with your bank to see if you can use the first four digits or will have to get a new number for use in France.

To get a cash advance by using a credit card at an ATM machine, ask for a PIN from your credit card company such as Visa before leaving your home country.

Note: Remember that many banks impose a fee every time you use a card at another bank’s ATM, and that fee can be higher for international transactions (up to \$5 or more) than for domestic ones (where they’re rarely more than \$2). In addition, the bank from which you withdraw cash may charge its own fee. For international withdrawal fees, ask your bank.

CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards are another safe way to carry money, but their use has become more difficult, especially in France (see below). They also provide a convenient record of all your expenses, and they generally offer relatively good exchange rates. You can usually withdraw cash advances from your credit cards at banks or ATMs, provided you know your PIN. Keep in mind that you'll pay interest from the moment of your withdrawal, even if you pay your monthly bills on time. Also, note that many banks now assess a 1% to 3% "transaction fee" on **all** charges you incur abroad (whether you're using the local currency or your native currency).

There is almost no difference in the acceptance of a debit or a standard credit card.

Chip and PIN represent a change in the way that credit and debit cards are used. The program is designed to cut down on the fraudulent use of credit cards. More and more banks are issuing customers Chip and PIN versions of their debit or credit cards. In the future, more and more vendors will be asking for a four-digit personal identification or PIN number, which will be entered into a keypad near the cash register. In some cases, a waiter will bring a hand-held model to your table to verify your credit card.

Warning: Some establishments in France might not accept your credit card unless you have a computer chip imbedded in it. The reason? To cut down on credit card fraud. More and more places in

Major Change in Credit Cards

In the interim between traditional swipe credit cards and those with an embedded computer chip, here's what you can do to protect yourself:

- Get a 4-digit PIN number from your credit card's issuing bank before leaving home.
 - Call the number on the back of each card and ask for a 4-digit PIN number.
 - Keep an eye out for the right logo displayed in a retailer's window. You want Visa or MasterCard, not Maestro, Visa Electron, or Carte Bleue.
 - Know that your Amex card will work where an Amex logo is displayed (but the card is not as widely accepted as Visa and MasterCard).
 - As a last resort, make sure you have enough cash to cover your purchase.
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France are moving from the magnetic strip credit card to the new system of “Chip and PIN.” In the changeover in technology, some retailers have falsely concluded that they can no longer take swipe cards or signature cards that don’t have PINs. For the time being, both the new and old cards are used in shops, hotels, and restaurants, regardless of whether they have the old credit and debit cards machines or the new Chip and PIN machines installed. Expect a lot of confusion.

TRAVELER’S CHECKS

You can buy traveler’s checks at most banks, and they are widely accepted in France, although frankly, merchants prefer cash. Because of difficulties with credit cards (see above) or ATM machines that can reject your card for no apparent reason, travelers are once again buying traveler’s checks for security in case something goes wrong with their plastic. They are offered in denominations of \$20, \$50, \$100, \$500, and sometimes \$1,000. Generally, you’ll pay a service charge ranging from 1% to 4%.

The most popular traveler’s checks are offered by **American Express** (☎ 800/528-4800, or 800/221-7282; www.americanexpress.com for cardholders—this number accepts collect calls, offers service in several foreign languages, and exempts Amex gold and platinum cardholders from the 1% fee); **Visa** (☎ 800/732-1322; www.visa.com)—AAA members can obtain Visa checks for a \$9.95 fee (for checks up to \$1,500) at most AAA offices or by calling ☎ 866/339-3378; and **MasterCard** (☎ 800/223-9920; www.mastercard.com).

American Express, Thomas Cook, Visa, and MasterCard offer **foreign currency traveler’s checks**, which are useful if you’re traveling to one country, or to the euro zone; they’re accepted at locations where dollar checks may not be.

If you carry traveler’s checks, keep a record of their serial numbers separate from your checks in the event that they are stolen or lost—you’ll get your refund faster.

5 Packages for the Independent Traveler

Package tours are simply a way to buy the airfare, accommodations, and other elements of your trip (such as car rentals, airport transfers, and sometimes even activities) at the same time and often at discounted prices.

One good source of package deals is the airlines themselves. Most major airlines offer air/land packages, including **American Airlines**

Vacations (☎ 800/321-2121; www.aavacations.com), **Delta Vacations** (☎ 800/654-6559; www.deltavacations.com), **Continental Airlines Vacations** (☎ 800/301-3800; www.covacations.com), and **United Vacations** (☎ 888/854-3899; www.unitedvacations.com). Several big **online travel agencies**—Expedia, Travelocity, Orbitz, Site59, and Lastminute.com—also do a brisk business in packages.

Franceway (www.franceway.com) puts together French packages, including airfares and government-rated three-star hotels from Paris to the Riviera. **Travel in France** (www.travel-in-france.com) is not a travel agency but helps you organize your own French package trip, featuring the best airfares on Air France. It also provides information on hotels in a range of prices. **FirstforFrance.com** can also help you put together a package vacation in France. The site maintains a Travel Centre in Paris where you can make bookings at hotels in a wide range of prices. All your arrangements can be made on the Web.

Travel packages are also listed in the travel section of your local Sunday newspaper. Or check ads in national travel magazines such as *Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel Magazine*, *Travel + Leisure*, *National Geographic Traveler*, and *Condé Nast Traveler*.

For more information on package tours and tips for booking your trip, see Frommers.com.

6 Escorted General-Interest Tours

Escorted tours are structured group tours, with a group leader. The price usually includes everything from airfare to hotels, meals, tours, admission costs, and local transportation.

The two largest operators conducting escorted tours of both Paris and scenic parts of France and Europe are **Globus + Cosmos Tours** (☎ 866/755-8581; www.globusandcosmos.com) and **Trafalgar** (☎ 800/854-0103; www.trafalgartours.com). Both have first-class tours that run about \$300 a day and budget tours for about \$100 a day. The differences are mainly in hotel location and the number of activities. There's little difference in the companies' services, so choose your tour based on the itinerary and date of departure. Brochures are available at travel agencies, and all tours must be booked through travel agents.

Tauck World Discovery, 10 Norden Pl., Norwalk, CT 06855 (☎ 800/788-7885; www.tauck.com), provides first-class, escorted coach grand tours of both Paris and the countryside of France, as well as 1-week general tours of regions in France. Its 13-day tour

covering the Normandy landing beaches, the Bayeux tapestry, and Mont-St-Michel begins at \$4,990 (£2,495) per person, double occupancy (land only); an 8-day trip beginning in Nice and ending in Paris starts at \$2,990 (£1,495) per person.

For more information on package-escorted, general-interest tours, including questions to ask before booking a trip, see Frommers.com.

7 Getting There

BY PLANE

The two Paris airports—Orly (airport code: ORY) and Charles de Gaulle (airport code: CDG)—are about even in terms of convenience to the city's center, though taxi rides from Orly may take less time than those from de Gaulle. Orly, the older of the two, is 14km (8½ miles) south of the center; Charles de Gaulle is 22km (14 miles) northeast. Air France serves Charles de Gaulle (Terminal 2C) from North America. U.S. carriers land at both airports.

Most airlines charge their lowest fares between November 1 and March 13. Shoulder season (Oct and mid-Mar–mid-June) is a bit more expensive, though we think it's the ideal time to visit France.

GETTING THERE FROM ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE

BY PLANE

From London, **Air France** (☎ 0870/142-4343; www.airfrance.com) and **British Airways** (☎ 0844/493-0787 in the U.K.; www.britishairways.com) fly frequently to Paris; the trip takes 1 hour. These airlines operate up to 17 flights daily from Heathrow. Many travelers also fly out of the London City Airport in the Docklands.

Direct flights to Paris operate from other U.K. cities such as Manchester and Edinburgh. Contact Air France, British Airways, or **British Midland** (☎ 0870/607-0555; www.flybmi.com). Daily papers often carry ads for cheap flights. Highly recommended **Trailfinders** (☎ 0845/058-5858; www.trailfinders.com) sells discount fares.

You can reach Paris from any major European capital. Your best bet is to fly on the national carrier, Air France, which has more connections into Paris from European capitals than any other airline. From Dublin, try **Aer Lingus** (☎ 800-IRISH-AIR; www.aerlingus.com), which schedules the most flights to Paris from Ireland. From Amsterdam, try **NWA/KLM** (☎ 800/225-2525; www.nwa.com).

BY TRAIN

Paris is one of Europe's busiest rail junctions, with trains arriving at and departing from its many stations every few minutes. If you're in Europe, you may want to go to Paris by train. The cost is relatively low—especially compared to renting a car.

Rail passes as well as individual rail tickets are available at most travel agencies or at any office of **Rail Europe** (☎ 888/382-7245 in the U.S.; www.raileurope.com) or **Eurostar** (☎ 800/EUROSTAR in the U.S.; www.eurostar.com).

BY BUS

Bus travel to Paris is available from London as well as many cities on the Continent. In the early 1990s, the French government established incentives for long-haul buses not to drive into the center of Paris. The arrival and departure point for Europe's largest operator, **Eurolines France**, 28 av. du Général-de-Gaulle, 93541 Bagnolet (☎ 08-92-89-90-91; www.eurolines.fr), is a 35-minute Métro ride from central Paris, at the terminus of line no. 3 (Métro: Gallieni), in the eastern suburb of Bagnolet. Despite this inconvenience, many people prefer bus travel.

Long-haul buses are equipped with toilets, and they stop at meal-times for rest and refreshment.

Because Eurolines does not have a U.S. sales agent, most people buy their tickets in Europe. Any European travel agent can arrange the sale. If you're traveling to Paris from London, contact **Eurolines (U.K.) Ltd.**, 52 Grosvenor Gardens, Victoria, London SW1 0AU (☎ 0870/580-8080; www.nationalexpress.com for information or credit card sales).

BY CAR

The major highways into Paris are A1 from the north (Great Britain and Benelux); A13 from Rouen, Normandy, and northwest France; A10 from Bordeaux, the Pyrénées, the southwest, and Spain; A6 from Lyon, the French Alps, the Riviera, and Italy; and A4 from Metz, Nancy, and Strasbourg in the east.

BY FERRY FROM ENGLAND

Ferries and hydrofoils operate day and night, with the exception of last-minute cancellations during storms. Many crossings are timed to coincide with the arrival and departure of trains (especially those between London and Paris). Trains let you off a short walk from the piers. Most ferries carry cars, trucks, and freight, but some hydrofoils take passengers only. The major routes include at least 12 trips a day between Dover or Folkestone and Calais or Boulogne.

**Fun Fact**

Under the Channel

Queen Elizabeth II and the late French president François Mitterrand opened the Channel Tunnel in 1994, and the **Eurostar Express** has daily passenger service from London to Paris and Brussels. The \$15 billion tunnel, one of the great engineering feats of our time, is the first link between Britain and the Continent since the Ice Age. The 50km (31-mile) journey takes 35 minutes, with actual time spent in the Chunnel 19 minutes.

Eurostar tickets are available through **Rail Europe** (☎ 888/382-7245; www.raileurope.com). In London, make reservations for Eurostar (or any other train in Europe) at ☎ 0870/518-6186. In Paris, call ☎ 01-70-70-60-88, and in the United States, call ☎ 800/EUROSTAR; www.eurostar.com. Chunnel train traffic is competitive with air travel, if you calculate door-to-door travel time. Trains leave from London's St. Pancras Station and arrive in Paris at Gare du Nord. Fares are complicated and depend on a number of factors. The cheapest one-way fare is Leisure RT, requiring a purchase at least 14 business days before the date of travel and a minimum 2-night stay. A return ticket must be booked to receive this discounted fare.

The Chunnel accommodates not only trains but also cars, buses, taxis, and motorcycles. **Eurotunnel**, a train carrying vehicles under the Channel (☎ 0870/535-3535 in the U.K.; www.eurotunnel.com), connects Calais, France, with Folkestone, England. It operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, running every 15 minutes during peak travel times and at least once an hour at night.

Before boarding Eurotunnel, you stop at a toll booth to pay and then pass through Immigration for both countries at one time. During the ride, you travel in air-conditioned carriages, remaining in your car or stepping outside to stretch your legs. An hour later, you simply drive off.

Hovercraft and hydrofoils make the trip from Dover to Calais, the shortest distance across the Channel, in just 40 minutes during good weather. The ferries may take several hours, depending on the weather and tides. If you're bringing a car, it's important to make

reservations—space below decks is usually crowded. Timetables can vary depending on weather conditions and many other factors.

The leading operator of ferries across the channel is **P&O Ferries** (☎ **0871/664-5645** in the U.K.; www.poferries.com). It operates car and passenger ferries between Portsmouth, England, and Cherbourg, France (three departures a day; 4 hr., 15 min. each way during daylight hours, 7 hr. each way at night); and between Portsmouth and Le Havre, France (three a day; 5½ hr. each way). Most popular is the route between Dover, England, and Calais, France (25 sailings a day; 75 min. each way).

8 Arrondissements in Brief

Each of Paris's 20 arrondissements possesses a unique style and flavor. You'll want to decide which district appeals most to you and then try to find accommodations there. Later on, try to visit as many areas as you can so you get the full taste of Paris.

1ST ARRONDISSEMENT (MUSEE DU LOUVRE/LES HALLES) "I never knew what a palace was until I had a glimpse of the Louvre," wrote Nathaniel Hawthorne. Perhaps the world's greatest art museum, the **Louvre**, a former royal residence, still lures visitors to the 1st arrondissement. Walk through the **Jardin des Tuileries**, Paris's most formal garden (laid out by Le Nôtre, gardener to Louis XIV). Pause to take in the classic beauty of **place Vendôme**, the opulent home of the Hôtel Ritz. Zola's "belly of Paris" (Les Halles) is no longer the food-and-meat market of Paris (traders moved to the new, more accessible suburb of Rungis); today the **Forum des Halles** is a center of shopping, entertainment, and culture.

2ND ARRONDISSEMENT (LA BOURSE) Home to the **Bourse** (stock exchange), this Right Bank district lies between the Grands Boulevards and rue Etienne-Marcel. From Monday to Friday, brokers play the market until it's time to break for lunch, when the movers and shakers of French capitalism channel their hysteria into the area restaurants. Much of the eastern end of the arrondissement (**Le Sentier**) is devoted to wholesale outlets of the Paris garment district, where thousands of garments are sold (usually in bulk) to buyers from clothing stores throughout Europe.

3RD ARRONDISSEMENT (LE MARAIS) This district embraces much of Le Marais (the swamp), one of the best-loved Right Bank neighborhoods. (It extends into the 4th as well.) After decades of decay, Le Marais recently made a comeback, though it may never again enjoy the prosperity of its 17th-century aristocratic

heyday; today it contains Paris's **gay neighborhood**, with lots of gay/lesbian restaurants, bars, and stores, as well as the remains of the old Jewish quarter, centered on **rue des Rosiers**. Two of the chief attractions are the **Musée Picasso**, a kind of pirate's ransom of painting and sculpture, which the Picasso estate had to turn over to the French government in lieu of the artist's astronomical death duties, and the **Musée Carnavalet**, which brings to life the history of Paris from prehistoric times to the present.

4TH ARRONDISSEMENT (ILE DE LA CITE/ILE ST-LOUIS & BEAUBOURG) It seems as if the 4th has it all: Notre-Dame on Ile de la Cité, and Ile St-Louis and its aristocratic town houses, courtyards, and antiques shops. **Ile St-Louis**, a former cow pasture and dueling ground, is home to dozens of 17th-century mansions and 6,000 lucky Louisiens, its permanent residents. Seek out **Ile de la Cité's** two Gothic churches, **Sainte-Chapelle** and **Notre-Dame**, a majestic structure that, according to poet E. E. Cummings, "doesn't budge an inch for all the idiocies of this world." You'll find France's finest bird and flower markets along with the nation's law courts, which Balzac described as a "cathedral of chicanery." It was here that Marie Antoinette was sentenced to death in 1793. The 4th is also home to the freshly renovated **Centre Pompidou**, one of the top-three attractions in France. After all this pomp and glory, you can retreat to **place des Vosges**, a square of perfect harmony and beauty where Victor Hugo lived from 1832 to 1848 and penned many of his famous masterpieces.

5TH ARRONDISSEMENT (QUARTIER LATIN) The Latin Quarter is the intellectual heart and soul of Paris. Bookstores, schools, churches, clubs, student dives, Roman ruins, publishing houses, and expensive boutiques characterize the district. Beginning with the founding of the **Sorbonne** in 1253, the quarter was called Latin because students and professors spoke the language. You'll follow in the footsteps of Descartes, Camus, Sartre, James Thurber, and Hemingway as you explore. Changing times have brought Greek, Moroccan, and Vietnamese immigrants, among others, offering everything from couscous to fiery-hot spring rolls and souvlaki. The 5th borders the Seine, and you'll want to stroll along quai de Montebello, inspecting the inventories of the *bouquinistes* (secondhand-book dealers), who sell everything from antique Daumier prints to yellowing copies of Balzac's *Père Goriot* in the shadow of Notre-Dame. The 5th also has the **Panthéon**, built by Louis XV after he recovered from gout and wanted to do something nice for St. Geneviève, Paris's patron saint. It's the resting place of Rousseau,

Gambetta, Zola, Braille, Hugo, Voltaire, and Jean Moulin, the World War II Resistance leader whom the Gestapo tortured to death.

6TH ARRONDISSEMENT (ST-GERMAIN/LUXEMBOURG)

This is the heartland of Paris publishing and, for some, the most colorful Left Bank quarter, where waves of young artists still emerge from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. The secret of the district lies in discovering its narrow streets, hidden squares, and magnificent gardens. To be really authentic, stroll with an unwrapped loaf of sourdough bread from the wood-fired ovens of **Poilâne** at 8 rue du Cherche-Midi. Everywhere you turn, you'll encounter historic and literary associations, nowhere more so than on **rue Jacob**. At no. 7, Racine lived with his uncle as a teenager; Richard Wagner resided at no. 14 from 1841 to 1842; Ingres lived at no. 27 (now it's the office of the French publishing house Editions du Seuil); and Hemingway once occupied a tiny upstairs room at no. 44. The 6th takes in the **Jardin du Luxembourg**, a 24-hectare (59-acre) playground where Isadora Duncan went dancing in the predawn hours and a destitute Ernest Hemingway went looking for pigeons for lunch, carrying them in a baby carriage back to his humble flat for cooking.

7TH ARRONDISSEMENT (EIFFEL TOWER/MUSEE D'ORSAY) Paris's most famous symbol, **la Tour Eiffel**, dominates Paris and especially the 7th, a Left Bank district of residences and offices. The tower is one of the most recognizable landmarks in the world, despite the fact that many Parisians (especially its nearest neighbors) hated it when it was unveiled in 1889. Many of Paris's most imposing monuments are in the 7th, such as **Hôtel des Invalides**, which contains Napoleon's Tomb and the Musée de l'Armée, and the **Musée d'Orsay**, the world's premier showcase of 19th-century French art and culture, housed in the old Gare d'Orsay. But there's much hidden charm here as well. **Rue du Bac** was home to the swashbuckling heroes of Dumas's *The Three Musketeers* and to James McNeill Whistler, who moved to no. 110 after selling *Mother*. Auguste Rodin lived at what's now the **Musée Rodin**, 77 rue de Varenne, until his death in 1917.

8TH ARRONDISSEMENT (CHAMPS-ELYSEES/MADELEINE) The showcase of the 8th is the **Champs-Élysées**, stretching from the **Arc de Triomphe** to the Egyptian obelisk on **place de la Concorde**. By the 1980s, the Champs-Élysées had become a garish strip, with too much traffic, too many fast-food joints, and too many panhandlers. In the 1990s, Jacques Chirac, then the Gaullist mayor, launched a cleanup, broadening the sidewalks and planting new trees. Now you'll find fashion houses,

elegant hotels, restaurants, and shops. Everything in the 8th is the city's best, grandest, and most impressive. It has the best restaurant (**Taillevent**), the sexiest strip joint (**Crazy Horse Saloon**), the most splendid square (**place de la Concorde**), the grandest hotel (the **Crillon**), the most impressive arch (**Arc de Triomphe**), the most expensive residential street (**avenue Montaigne**), the world's oldest subway station (**Franklin-D.-Roosevelt**), and the most ancient monument (the 3,300-year-old **Obelisk of Luxor**).

9TH ARRONDISSEMENT (OPERA GARNIER/PIGALLE)

From the Quartier de l'Opéra to the strip joints of Pigalle (the infamous "Pig Alley" of World War II GIs), the 9th endures, even if fashion prefers other addresses. Over the decades, the 9th has been celebrated in literature and song for the music halls that brought gaiety to the city. The building at 17 bd. de la Madeleine was where Marie Duplessis, who gained fame as the heroine Marguerite Gautier in Alexandre Dumas the younger's *La Dame aux Camellias*, died. (Greta Garbo played her in the film *Camille*.)

Place Pigalle has nightclubs, but is no longer home to café La Nouvelle Athènes, where Degas, Pissarro, and Manet used to meet. Other attractions include the **Folies-Bergère**, where cancan dancers have been high-kicking since 1868. It is the rococo **Opéra Garnier** (home of the Phantom) that made the 9th the last hurrah of Second Empire opulence. Renoir hated it, but generations later, Chagall painted its ceilings. Pavlova danced *Swan Lake* here, and Nijinsky took the night off to go cruising.

10TH ARRONDISSEMENT (GARE DU NORD/GARE DE L'EST)

The **Gare du Nord** and **Gare de l'Est**, along with porno houses and dreary commercial zones, make the 10th one of the least desirable arrondissements for living, dining, or sightseeing. We try to avoid it except for one of our longtime favorite restaurants: **Brasserie Flo** (☎ 01-47-70-13-59), 7 cour des Petites-Ecuries, best known for its formidable *choucroute*, a heap of sauerkraut garnished with everything.

11TH ARRONDISSEMENT (OPERA BASTILLE) For many years, this quarter seemed to sink lower and lower into decay, overcrowded by working-class immigrants from the far reaches of the former Empire. The opening of the **Opéra Bastille**, however, has given the 11th new hope and new life. The facility, called the "people's opera house," stands on the landmark place de la Bastille, where on July 14, 1789, 633 Parisians stormed the fortress and seized the ammunition depot, as the French Revolution swept across the city. Over the years, the prison held such luminaries as Voltaire and the Marquis de Sade. The area between

the Marais, Ménilmontant, and République is now being called “blue-collar chic,” as the *artistes* of Paris who’ve been driven from the costlier sections of the Marais can now be found walking the gritty sidewalks of rue Oberkampf. Hip Parisians in search of a more cutting-edge experience are now living and working among the decaying 19th-century apartments and the 1960s public housing with graffiti-splattered walls.

12TH ARRONDISSEMENT (BOIS DE VINCENNES/GARE DE LYON) Very few out-of-towners came here until a French chef opened a restaurant called **Au Trou Gascon** (p. 71). The 12th’s major attraction remains the **Bois de Vincennes**, sprawling on the eastern periphery of Paris. This park is a longtime favorite of French families who enjoy its zoos and museums, its royal châteaux and boating lakes, and its **Parc Floral de Paris**, a celebrated flower garden boasting springtime rhododendrons and autumn dahlias. Venture into the dreary **Gare de Lyon** for **Le Train Bleu**, 20 bd. Diderot (☎ 01-43-43-09-06), in the Gare de Lyon, 12e, a restaurant whose ceiling frescoes and Art Nouveau decor are national artistic treasures; the food is good, too. The 12th, once a depressing urban wasteland, has been singled out for budgetary resuscitation and is beginning to sport new housing, shops, gardens, and restaurants. Many will occupy the site of the former Reuilly rail tracks.

13TH ARRONDISSEMENT (GARE D’AUSTERLITZ) Centered on the grimy **Gare d’Austerlitz**, the 13th might have its devotees, but we’ve yet to meet one. British snobs who flitted in and out of the train station were among the first of the district’s foreign visitors and wrote the 13th off as a dreary working-class counterpart of London’s East End. The 13th is also home to Paris’s **Chinatown**, stretching for 13 square blocks around the Tolbiac Métro stop. It emerged out of the refugee crisis at the end of the Vietnam War, taking over a neighborhood that held mostly Arab-speaking peoples. Today, recognizing overcrowding in the district, the Paris civic authorities are imposing new, not particularly welcome, restrictions on population densities.

14TH ARRONDISSEMENT (MONTPARNASSE) The northern end of this large arrondissement is devoted to **Montparnasse**, home of the “Lost Generation” and stomping ground of Stein, Toklas, Hemingway, and other American expatriates of the 1920s. After World War II, it ceased to be the center of intellectual life, but the memory lingers in its cafes. One of the monuments that sets the tone of the neighborhood is **Rodin’s statue of Balzac** at the junction of boulevards Montparnasse and Raspail.

At this corner are some of the world's most famous **literary cafes**, including La Rotonde, Le Select, La Dôme, and La Coupole. Though Gertrude Stein avoided them (she loathed cafes), other American expats, including Hemingway and Fitzgerald, had no qualms about enjoying a drink here (or quite a few of them, for that matter). Stein stayed at home (27 rue de Fleurus) with Alice B. Toklas, collecting paintings, including those of Picasso, and entertaining the likes of Max Jacob, Apollinaire, T. S. Eliot, and Matisse.

15TH ARRONDISSEMENT (GARE MONTPARNASSE/INSTITUT PASTEUR) This is a mostly residential district beginning at **Gare Montparnasse** and stretching to the Seine. In size and population, it's the largest quarter of Paris, but it draws few tourists and has few attractions except for the **Parc des Expositions**, the **Cimetière du Montparnasse**, and the **Institut Pasteur**. In the early 20th century, many artists—such as Chagall, Léger, and Modigliani—lived here in a shared atelier known as “The Beehive.”

16TH ARRONDISSEMENT (TROCADERO/BOIS DE BOULOGNE) Originally the village of Passy, where Benjamin Franklin lived during most of his time in Paris, this district is still reminiscent of Proust's world. Highlights include the **Bois de Boulogne**; the **Jardin du Trocadéro**; the **Maison de Balzac**; the **Musée Guimet** (famous for its Asian collections); and the **Cimetière de Passy**, resting place of Manet, Talleyrand, Giraudoux, and Debussy. One of the largest arrondissements, it's known today for its well-heeled bourgeoisie, its upscale rents, and some rather posh (and, according to its critics, rather smug) residential boulevards. The arrondissement also has the best vantage point to view the Eiffel Tower: **place du Trocadéro**.

17TH ARRONDISSEMENT (PARC MONCEAU/PLACE CLICHY) Flanking the northern periphery of Paris, the 17th incorporates neighborhoods of bourgeois respectability (in its west end) and less affluent neighborhoods in its east end. It boasts two of the great restaurants of Paris, **Guy Savoy** and **Michel Rostang**.

18TH ARRONDISSEMENT (MONTMARTRE) The 18th is the most famous outer quarter of Paris, containing **Montmartre**, the **Moulin Rouge**, **Sacré-Coeur**, and ultratouristy **place du Tertre**. Utrillo was its native son; Renoir lived here; and Toulouse-Lautrec adopted the area as his own. The most famous enclave of artists in Paris's history, the **Bateau-Lavoir** of Picasso fame, gathered here. Max Jacob, Matisse, and Braque were all frequent visitors. Today, place Blanche is known for its prostitutes, and

Montmartre is filled with honky-tonks, souvenir shops, and terrible restaurants. You can still find pockets of quiet beauty, though. The city's most famous flea market, the **Marché aux Puces de Clignancourt**, is another landmark.

19TH ARRONDISSEMENT (LA VILLETTE) Today, visitors come to what was once the village of La Villette to see the angular **Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie**, a spectacular science museum and park built on a site that for years was devoted to the city's slaughterhouses. Mostly residential and not at all upscale, the district is one of the most ethnically diverse in Paris, the home of people from all parts of the former Empire. A highlight is **Les Buttes Chaumont**, a park where kids can enjoy puppet shows and donkey rides.

20TH ARRONDISSEMENT (PERE-LACHAISE CEMETERY) The 20th's greatest landmark is **Père-Lachaise Cemetery**, the resting place of Edith Piaf, Marcel Proust, Oscar Wilde, Isadora Duncan, Sarah Bernhardt, Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, Colette, Jim Morrison, and many others. Otherwise, the 20th arrondissement is a dreary and sometimes volatile melting pot comprising residents from France's former colonies. Though nostalgia buffs sometimes head here to visit Piaf's former neighborhood, **Ménilmontant-Belleville**, it has been almost totally bulldozed and rebuilt since the days when she grew up here.

9 Getting Around

CITY LAYOUT

Paris is surprisingly compact. Occupying 2,723 sq. km (1,051 sq. miles), its urban area is home to more than 11 million people. The river Seine divides Paris into the **Rive Droite (Right Bank)** to the north and the **Rive Gauche (Left Bank)** to the south. These designations make sense when you stand on a bridge and face downstream (west)—to your right is the north bank, to your left the south. A total of 32 bridges link the Right Bank and the Left Bank. Some provide access to the two islands at the heart of the city—**Ile de la Cité**, the city's birthplace and site of Notre-Dame; and **Ile St-Louis**, a moat-guarded oasis of 17th-century mansions.

The main street on the Right Bank is **avenue des Champs-Élysées**, beginning at the Arc de Triomphe and running to place de la Concorde. Avenue des Champs-Élysées and 11 other avenues radiate like the arms of an asterisk from the Arc de Triomphe, giving it its original name, place de l'Etoile (*étoile* means "star"). It was

renamed place Charles-de-Gaulle following the general's death; today, it's often referred to as place Charles-de-Gaulle–Etoile.

FINDING AN ADDRESS Paris is divided into 20 municipal wards called *arrondissements*, each with its own city hall, police station, and post office; some have remnants of market squares. Arrondissements spiral out clockwise from the 1st, in the geographical center of the city. The 2nd through the 8th form a ring around the 1st, and the 9th through the 17th form an outer ring around the inner ring. The 18th, 19th, and 20th are at the far northern and eastern reaches of the Right Bank. Arrondissements 5, 6, 7, 13, 14, and 15 are on the Left Bank.

Most city maps are divided by arrondissement, and addresses include the arrondissement number (in Roman or Arabic numerals and followed by “er” or “e”). Paris also has its own version of a zip code. The mailing address for a hotel is written as, for example, “Paris 75014.” The last two digits, 14, indicate that the address is in the 14th arrondissement—in this case, Montparnasse.

Numbers on buildings running parallel to the Seine usually follow the course of the river—east to west. On perpendicular streets, building numbers begin low closer to the river.

MAPS If you're staying more than 2 or 3 days, purchase an inexpensive pocket-size book called *Paris par arrondissement*, available at newsstands and bookshops; prices start at 6.50€ (\$9.40). This guide provides you with a Métro map, a foldout map of the city, and maps of each arrondissement, with all streets listed and keyed.

ARRIVING

BY PLANE Paris has two international airports: **Aéroport d'Orly**, 14km (8½ miles) south of the city, and **Aéroport Roissy–Charles de Gaulle**, 23km (14 miles) northeast. A shuttle (16€/\$23) makes the 50- to 75-minute journey between the two airports about every 30 minutes.

Charles de Gaulle Airport (Roissy) At Charles de Gaulle (☎ 01-48-62-12-12 or 39-50 from France only), foreign carriers use Aérogare 1, while Air France uses Aérogare 2. From Aérogare 1, you take a moving walkway to the passport checkpoint and the Customs area. A *navette* (shuttle bus) links the two terminals.

The free shuttle buses also transport you to the **Roissy rail station**, from which fast RER (Réseau Express Régional) trains leave every 10 minutes between 5am and midnight for Métro stations including Gare du Nord, Châtelet, Luxembourg, Port-Royal, and

Denfert-Rochereau. A typical fare from Roissy to any point in central Paris is 8.20€ (\$12) per adult (5.60€/\$8.10) for children 4 to 10. Travel time from the airport to central Paris is around 35 to 40 minutes.

You can also take an **Air France shuttle bus** (☎ 08-92-35-08-20 or 01-48-64-14-24; www.cars-airfrance.com) to central Paris for 13€ (\$19) one-way, 20€ (\$29) roundtrip. It stops at the Palais des Congrès (Port Maillot) and continues to place Charles-de-Gaulle-Étoile, where subway lines can carry you to any point in Paris. That ride, depending on traffic, takes 45 to 55 minutes. The shuttle departs about every 20 minutes between 5:40am and 11pm.

The **Roissybus** (☎ 01-58-76-16-16), operated by the RATP, departs from the airport daily from 6am to 11:45pm and costs 8.60€ (\$12) for the 45- to 50-minute ride. Departures are about every 15 minutes, and the bus leaves you near the corner of rue Scribe and place de l'Opéra in the heart of Paris.

A **taxi** from Roissy into the city will cost about 47€ to 60€ (\$68–\$87); from 8pm to 7am the fare is 40% higher. Long, orderly lines for taxis form outside each of the airport's terminals.

Orly Airport Orly (☎ 01-49-75-52-52 or 39-50 from France only) has two terminals—Orly Sud (south) for international flights and Orly Ouest (west) for domestic flights. A free shuttle bus connects them in 3 minutes.

Air France buses leave from Exit E of Orly Sud and from Exit F of Orly Ouest every 12 minutes between 6am and 11:30pm for Gare des Invalides; the fare is 9€ (\$13) one-way, 14€ (\$20) round-trip. Returning to the airport (about 30 min.), buses leave both the Montparnasse and the Invalides terminal for Orly Sud or Orly Ouest every 15 minutes.

Another way to get to central Paris is to take the RER from points throughout central Paris to the station at Pont-de-Rungis/Aéroport d'Orly for a per-person one-way fare of 6€ (\$8.70), and from there, take the free shuttle bus that departs every 15 minutes from Pont-de-Rungis to both of Orly's terminals. Combined travel time is about 45 to 55 minutes.

A **taxi** from Orly to central Paris costs about 30€ to 50€ (\$44–\$73), more at night. Don't take a meterless taxi from Orly—it's much safer (and usually cheaper) to hire one of the metered cabs, which are under the scrutiny of a police officer.

Tips The Paris Airport Shuttle

The **Paris Airport Shuttle** (☎ 01-53-39-18-18; fax 01-53-39-13-13; www.parishuttle.com) is the best option for airport transit. It charges 25€ (\$36) for one person or 19€ (\$28) per person for two or more going to and from Charles de Gaulle or Orly. Both shuttles accept American Express, Visa, and MasterCard, with 1-day advance reservations required.

BY TRAIN Paris has six major stations: **Gare d'Austerlitz**, 55 quai d'Austerlitz, 13e (serving the southwest, with trains to and from the Loire Valley, Bordeaux, the Pyrénées, and Spain); **Gare de l'Est**, place du 11-Novembre-1918, 10e (serving the east, with trains to and from Strasbourg, Reims, and beyond, to Zurich and Austria); **Gare de Lyon**, 20 bd. Diderot, 12e (serving the southeast, with trains to and from the Côte d'Azur [Nice, Cannes, St-Tropez], Provence, and beyond, to Geneva and Italy); **Gare Montparnasse**, 17 bd. Vaugirard, 15e (serving the west, with trains to and from Brittany); **Gare du Nord**, 18 rue de Dunkerque, 15e (serving the north, with trains to and from London, Holland, Denmark, and northern Germany); and **Gare St-Lazare**, 13 rue d'Amsterdam, 8e (serving the northwest, with trains to and from Normandy). Buses operate between the stations, and each station has a Métro stop. For train information and to make reservations, call ☎ 08-92-35-35-35 from abroad, or 36-35 from France, between 8am and 8pm daily. From Paris, one-way rail passage to Tours costs 30€ to 51€ (\$44–\$74); one-way to Strasbourg 55€ or 80€ (\$80 or \$116), depending on the routing.

Warning: The stations and surrounding areas are usually seedy and frequented by pickpockets, hustlers, hookers, and addicts. Be alert, especially at night.

BY BUS Most buses arrive at the **Eurolines France** station, 28 av. du Général-de-Gaulle, Bagnolet (☎ 08-92-89-90-91; www.eurolines.fr; Métro: Gallieni).

BY CAR Driving in Paris is *not* recommended. Parking is difficult and traffic dense. If you drive, remember that Paris is encircled by a ring road, the *périphérique*. Always obtain detailed directions to your destination, including the name of the exit on the *périphérique* (exits aren't numbered). Avoid rush hours.

The major highways into Paris are A1 from the north; A13 from Rouen, Normandy, and other points northwest; A10 from Spain and the southwest; A6 and A7 from the French Alps, the Riviera, and Italy; and A4 from eastern France.

BY METRO (SUBWAY) The Métro (☎ 08-92-69-32-46 from abroad, or 32-46 from France; www.ratp.fr) is the most efficient and fastest way to get around Paris. All lines are numbered, and the final destination of each line is clearly marked on subway maps, in the system's underground passageways, and on the train cars. The Métro runs daily from 5:30am to 1:15am (last departure at 2am on Saturday). It's reasonably safe at any hour, but beware of pickpockets.

Most stations display a map of the Métro at the entrance. To locate your correct train on a map, find your destination, follow the line to the end of its route, and note the name of the final stop, which is that line's direction. In the station, follow the signs for your direction in the passageways until you see the label on a train. Many larger stations have maps with push-button indicators that light up your route when you press the button for your destination.

Transfer stations are *correspondances*—some require long walks; Châtelet is the most difficult—but most trips require only one transfer. When transferring, follow the orange CORRESPONDANCE signs to the proper platform. Don't follow a SORTIE (exit) sign, or you'll have to pay again to get back on the train.

On the urban lines, one ticket for 1.50€ (\$2.20) lets you travel to any point. On the Sceaux, Boissy-St-Léger, and St-Germain-en-Laye lines to the suburbs, fares are based on distance. A *carnet* is the best buy—10 tickets for about 11€ (\$16).

At the turnstile entrances to the station, insert your ticket and pass through. At some exits, tickets are also checked, so hold onto yours. There are occasional ticket checks on trains and platforms and in passageways, too.

RER TRAINS A suburban train system, RER (Réseau Express Regional), passes through the heart of Paris, traveling faster than the Métro and running daily from 5:30am to 1am. This system works like the Métro and requires the same tickets. The major stops within central Paris, linking the RER to the Métro, are Nation, Gare de Lyon, Charles de Gaulle-Étoile, Gare-Étoile, and Gare du Nord as well as Châtelet-Les-Halles. All these stops are on the Right Bank. On the Left Bank, RER stops include Denfert-Rochereau and St-Michel. The five RER lines are marked A through E. Different

branches are labeled by a number, the C5 Line serving Versailles-Rive Gauche, for example. Electric signboards next to each track outline all the possible stops along the way. Make sure that the little square next to your intended stop is lit.

BY BUS Buses are much slower than the Métro. The majority run from 6:30am to 9:30pm (a few operate until 12:30am, and 10 operate during early morning hours). Service is limited on Sundays and holidays. Bus and Métro fares are the same; you can use the same tickets on both. Most bus rides require one ticket, but some destinations require two (never more than two within the city limits).

At certain stops, signs list destinations and bus numbers serving that point. Destinations are usually listed north to south and east to west. Most stops are also posted on the sides of the buses. During rush hours, you may have to take a ticket from a dispensing machine, indicating your position in the line at the stop.

If you intend to use the buses a lot, pick up an RATP bus map at the office on place de la Madeleine, 8e, or at the tourist offices at RATP headquarters, 54 Quai de La Rapée, 12e. For detailed recorded information (in English) on bus and Métro routes, call ☎ **01-58-76-16-16** (or 32-46 in France), open Monday to Friday 7am to 9pm.

The RATP also operates the **Balabus**, big-windowed, orange-and-white motorcoaches that run only during limited hours: Sundays and national holidays from noon to 8:30pm, from April 15 to the end of September. Itineraries run in both directions between Gare de Lyon and the Grande Arche de La Défense, encompassing some beautiful vistas. It's a great deal—three Métro tickets for 1.50€ (\$2.20) each, will carry you the entire route. You'll recognize the bus and the route it follows by the Bb symbol emblazoned on each bus's side and on signs posted beside the route it follows.