

1 Family Highlights of Paris & Disneyland®



Few cities evoke as much promise and passion as the French capital. The mention of its name is enough for people to go starry-eyed as they dream of walking along the banks of the River Seine, stopping in café terraces, eating in some of Europe's finest restaurants, and introducing their children to the cultural attractions of one of the most beautiful capital cities in the world.

Paris has always been *the* city for me; first as a teenager, when my parents unexpectedly extended our holiday in Brittany to Paris and Disneyland (I remember walking across the gardens on the Champs-Élysées, dodging the sprinklers on the flowerbeds, and being wowed by Disney's fireworks display); then as a happy-go-lucky student on my year abroad; and now as an ex-pat who still hasn't seen everything there is to see – even after eight years.

I'm not alone in my enthusiasm. The French government reports that the world's most visited attractions last year were the Louvre (7.6 million), the Eiffel Tower (6.4 million), the Pompidou Centre (5.3 million), and Versailles (3.3 million) – proof that Paris and its suburbs are simply inexhaustible in their ability to charm.

For many families Paris is about discovery, the memories your family makes, and the broader history you, the children and the city are part of. But don't let yourself get stuck in the city centre for the whole of your trip – the **île-de-France** (the region in which Paris lies) brims with activities for families, be it the parks and forests on the outer edges – Bois de Boulogne and Parc de la Villette; Versailles – the Sun King's Palace; Parc Astérix – a thoroughly French theme park; or **Disneyland® Resort Paris**, where the frivolous fun Walt Disney dedicated his life to bursts into action inside a fast-moving resort that you could easily spend two days in.

Placing both feet firmly on the ground again, visiting with children, especially babies and toddlers, can be frustrating in the city centre. Restaurants (unless you aim at the top end) rarely have high chairs or clean toilets, and the Métro with its narrow turnstiles and never-ending staircases is unsuitable for buggies. However, once you've accepted this and brought along the necessities (wipes, baby-carriers, etc... see Children's Kit p. 20), you'll find Paris a delightful city – whatever the weather or the time of year.

BEST FAMILY EXPERIENCES

Strolling along the Seine is a highly enjoyable way to take in Paris's iconic, sweeping vistas, identify the main sights, and

absorb the laid-back atmosphere as lovers walk hand in hand, anglers cast their lines, *bouquinistes* (secondhand-book dealers, see p. 163) peddle their old editions, and rollerbladers and cyclists dodge passers-by—especially on Sundays during

the summer months when stretches of the quaysides are closed to cars, and the river's edge becomes a beach with activities for youngsters. See *Paris Plage*, p. 24.

Ambling around the open-air or covered markets (*marchés*) to buy fresh food – perhaps a ripe 'n' creamy Camembert, some *saucisson*, or a pumpkin-gold melon for a picnic. For market listings see each chapter.

Meeting Mickey and Friends can be the highlight of any young child's trip to Disneyland Paris. To make the magic last longer, book a Disneyland Resort® hotel where the characters make regular appearances, and sometimes join you for breakfast. See p. 234.

Watching a movie in the open air in July and August at **Parc**

Enjoy the bustling markets



de la Villette. Parisians turn up in their thousands, picnic basket and blankets in hand, to watch films projected onto Europe's largest inflatable screens. This is the ultimate way for your family to soak up the easy-going atmosphere that reigns in Paris during the summer months. See p. 140.

Cheering on the jockeys in the famous and classy **Hippodrome de Longchamp**, in the Bois de Boulogne (the site of the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe Grand Prix) or the **Hippodrome d'Auteuil** (see p. 22) is fun throughout the year, but even better on Sundays in April and May when huge picnic areas are set up between the tracks, with candyfloss, games and attractions for children. See *Les Dimanches au Galop*, p. 22.

Pulling faces at the gargoyles on top of Notre-Dame – taking photos of family members impersonating one, then deciding who was most convincing. See p. 186.

Getting to the top of the Eiffel Tower never fails to impress and is something everybody should do at least once in their lives. At night, the tower sparkles like a giant Christmas tree, every hour on the hour for 10 minutes. See p. 77.

Immortalising your children with a portrait painted at Place du Tertre is cheesy but fun. The café-lined square in Montmartre, once frequented by painters like Toulouse Lautrec, is jam-packed with modern artists ready to caricature your youngsters

and give you something fun to look back on. See p. 112.

Taking the boat along the Canal St-Martin from Bastille to the Villette quarter, past tree-lined quays and old working-class areas – now gentrified and rather hip. Canauxrama, see p. 139.

Feeling sombre in the Mémorial des Martyrs Français de la Déportation de 1945 (Deportation Memorial) on the tip of Île de la Cité. It movingly brings home the fact that the Nazi genocide took millions of lives, many from Paris. See p. 188.

Walking up the Champs-Élysées past chic shops, cinemas, car showrooms, and cafés towards the Arc de Triomphe where you can see the grave of the unknown soldier and climb the arch for spectacular views across Paris. See p. 60.

Getting dressed up for a gourmet family treat in the Crillon palace hotel's restaurant Les Ambassadeurs (or their lower-key and less expensive brasserie L'Obélisque). See p. 70.

Blanc à Manger at Les Ambassadeurs



Catching a puppet show in the Théâtre des Marionnettes, smack-bang in the heart of the Luxembourg gardens makes for a wonderful Gallic giggle, whether your children speak French or not. See p. 161.

Taking the funicular to the top of the Butte de Montmartre from where you can visit the Sacré Coeur basilica, take in sweeping vistas of the whole of Paris, and watch talented street performers. See p. 104.

Bike riding along the Canal St-Martin, lined with cafés and shops, up to the Canal de l'Ourcq and Parc de la Villette with its open spaces and fabulous children's science museum, or beyond to the Marne river. See p. 140.

Strolling on top of a converted viaduct on the Promenade Plantée. Pack a picnic or some games for the Jardin de Reuilly (see p. 140) or further on in the Bois de Vincennes (see p. 140), or come down to ground level near Bastille and look in the interesting shops under the viaduct arcades. See p. 140.

Riding the transparent escalator tubes on the side of the Pompidou Centre is almost as fun as seeing the works of art inside. Watch in wonder as the rooftops get closer and closer, and look to see which lucky devils have rooftop gardens. See p. 124.

Tucking into Oriental pâtisseries and couscous inside the Paris Mosque (Mosquée de



Enjoy the open space at Parc de la Villette

Paris). On a sunny day opt for a table in the white-and-blue tiled courtyard where cheeky sparrows fly down to beg for crumbs. See p. 184.

Taking a boat trip along the Seine is a relaxing way to admire Paris's beautiful quays and monuments. It's also the best way to see the sculptures and underbellies of the bridges. Both **Bateaux Parisiens** (see p. 87) and **Bateaux Mouches** (see p. 87) companies offer commented tours. You can also use the **Batobus** boats like a bus service along the river. See p. 49.

BEST CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUNDS & PARKS

Jardin d'Acclimatation in the Bois de Boulogne is one of the best parks in Paris for families with children of all ages: you can

pet animals, get soaking wet under sprinklers, test the roller-coasters, take a relaxing boat ride, swing off climbing frames, and navigate remote-controlled boats. Take time too to go boating on the lake and laugh at your funny forms in front of the distorting mirrors. A handy mini-train transports families from Porte Maillot to the Jardin. See p. 245.

Jardin de Luxembourg

Youngsters love riding on the backs of ponies and donkeys, and playing in the enclosed play area and sandpits. Older children can try their hand at a game of chess if they're brave enough to take on the ageing regulars. See p. 160.

Jardin du Palais Royal

Cardinal Richelieu's former gardens are exceedingly pretty, surrounded by covered arcades, and shaded by trees. Young children will enjoy climbing on the modernist black-and-white pillar-sculptures near the front entrance. If you have older ones into photography, get them to take some arty shots of the sculptures and shadows cast between the arcade railings. See p. 65.

Jardin Tino Rossi With the Institut du Monde Arabe (see p. 176) on one side and the Seine in the other, this picturesque park is a skateboarders' paradise. See p. 194.

Parc de la Villette This is a must-see for families with children of any age. The park area is made up of wide open lawns,

perfect for kicking a ball around in, and enclosed parts surrounded by plants for a secluded read or picnic. Different play areas target children from babies to 12-year-olds, featuring climbing frames, swings, and carousels. See p. 246.

Pocahontas Village in Disney

This is a tranquil spot for your little ones to run around in away from the queues and hype of Disneyland Park®'s big attractions. (It's also a secluded spot to breast-feed a baby.) See p. 216.

TOP ATTRACTIONS FOR TEENS

Autour de Midi-Minuit This hip Montmartre jazz institution is a cool place to be seen, with or without parents in tow. Dine in the upstairs restaurant before heading down to the vaulted cellar for some serious foot-tapping, and music played by both confirmed and up-and-coming artists. See p. 115.

Catacombs See if your teenagers are as intrepid as they say they are by taking them 18m underground to these fascinating quarry tunnels, filled with the remains of millions of Parisians, whose bones had to be moved in the 18th century when Paris's communal graves burst. See p. 162.

Jeu de Paume At the bottom of the Tuileries gardens, this museum is devoted to experimental film and photography –

a must-see for teenagers interested in image. See p. 196.

Palais de Tokyo If your teenagers are into modern, experimental art, they'll love the weird and wacky installations on show in this 1930s' Art Deco palace. Take a break in the funky restaurant, Tokyo Eat, where lights look like giant floating eggs. See p. 85.

The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror in Disneyland's Walt Disney Studios® Park is their brand new thrillseekers' ride that plunges the brave straight down a 13-floor lift-shaft. See p. 226.

Tonnère de Zeus In the Parc Astérix Gallois theme-park, this is the ultimate stomach-churner: a 30m vertical drop on Europe's biggest wooden rollercoaster. See p. 246.

BEST MUSEUMS

Cité des Sciences In Parc de la Villette, the science museum has been specially designed with children in mind and interactive displays allow children to manipulate the exhibits. See p. 247.

Musée Carnavalet This museum is not only free to get into, it's set in two of Paris's most lovely mansions and documents the history of the city in an interesting and understandable manner for children. See p. 127.

Musée de Cluny If your youngsters love history, this medieval museum will teach them about how people lived in the Middle Ages, and show them the old Roman baths built by Parisian boatmen. See p. 182.

Musée d'Orsay This former railway station houses one of the world's best collections of Impressionist art. Treat your children to lunch in the Café des Hauteurs – a relaxed table-service restaurant that looks out over the city from behind a giant, transparent clock-face. See p. 154.

Musée du Quai Branly This neo-cubist building by the Eiffel Tower is a new museum dedicated to non-European cultures. The views from the rooftop restaurant to the Eiffel Tower are particularly good – a special treat for well-behaved children. See p. 82.

Musée Rodin Easily the most charming museum in Paris, this stately home with its sumptuous statue-studded gardens makes Rodin's statues accessible to children. If you don't want to go around the house, come to enjoy an ice cream in the gardens – free entry for parents with buggies. See p. 84.

The Louvre This world-famous museum is so big there's always more to see, even if you've been before. Children particularly love the mummies in the Egyptology department and the castle remains in the Medieval Louvre. See p. 48.



Explore the Louvre

BEST ART SITES

Centre Pompidou The avant-garde building is as much a piece of art as the works inside – the most important and comprehensive multi-disciplinary art collection in Europe. The art spans from 1905 to today, with a separate section for post-1960s works and a temporary exhibition floor. See p. 124.

Cité de l'Architecture

Architecture as an art form is given pride of place in this vast museum where ceilings are tall enough to house portions of cathedrals and a recreation of the Le Corbusier house. See p. 76.

Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris The Pompidou doesn't have it all; this excellent museum, opposite the Palais de Tokyo, has a good selection of Cubist and Fauvist art. See p. 80.

Musée Gustave Moreau For older children looking for something different from Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism, Moreau's fantasist style

Parisian History in a Nutshell for Children

2000 B.C. Lutétia thrives along a strategic crossing of the Seine, the headquarters of the Parisii tribe.

52 B.C. Julius Caesar conquers Lutétia during the Gallic Wars.

200 A.D. Barbarian Gauls force the Romans to retreat to the fortifications on Ile de la Cité.

300 Lutétia is renamed Paris; Roman power weakens in northern France.

350 Paris's Christianisation begins.

400s The Franks invade Paris, and there is social transformation from the Roman to the Gallo-Roman culture.

466 Clovis, founder of the Merovingian dynasty and first non-Roman ruler of Paris since the Parisii, is born.

800 Charlemagne, founder of the Carolingian dynasty, is crowned Holy Roman Emperor and rules from Aachen in modern Germany.

987 Hugh Capet, founder of France's foremost early medieval dynasty, rises to power; his family rules from Paris.

1100s The Sorbonne University is founded and attracts scholars from across Europe.

1422 England invades Paris during the Hundred Years' War.

1429 Joan of Arc tries to regain Paris for the French. The Burgundians later capture and sell her to the English, who burn her at the stake in Rouen.

1500s François I, first of the French Renaissance kings, embellishes Paris but chooses to maintain his court in the Loire Valley.

1549 Henri II rules from Paris; construction of public and private residences begins, many in the Marais.

1572 The Wars of Religion reach their climax with the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre of Protestants.

1615 Construction begins on the Palais du Luxembourg for Henri IV's widow, Marie de Médicis.

1636 The Palais Royal is launched by Cardinal Richelieu.

1643 Louis XIV, the "Sun King" and the most powerful ruler since the Caesars, rises to power. He moves his court to the newly built Versailles.

1789 The French Revolution begins.

1793 Louis XVI and his Austrian-born queen, Marie Antoinette, are publicly guillotined.

1799 Napoleon Bonaparte crowns himself Emperor of France.

1803 Napoleon abandons French overseas expansion and sells Louisiana to America.

1812 Napoleon is defeated in the Russian winter campaign.

1814 Aided by a coalition of France's enemies, especially England, the Bourbon monarchy under Louis XVIII is restored.

1821 Napoleon Bonaparte dies.

1824 Louis XVIII dies, and Charles X succeeds him.

1830 The more liberal Louis-Philippe is elected king. Paris industrialises.

1848 A violent working-class revolution deposes Louis-Philippe, who's replaced by autocratic Napoleon III.

1853–70 On Napoleon III's orders, Baron Haussmann redesigns Paris's landscapes.

1860s The Impressionist style of painting emerges.

1870 The Franco–Prussian War ends in the defeat of France; a revolution rises and the Third Republic elects its president, Marshal MacMahon.

1878–1937 Several World Fairs and redevelopment add monuments to Paris's skyline, including the Tour Eiffel (1889) and the Sacré Coeur.

1895 Capt. Alfred Dreyfus, a Jew, is wrongfully charged with treason and sentenced to life on Devil's Island. The incident becomes the biggest political scandal of 19th century France.

1898 Emile Zola publishes *J'Accuse* in defence of Dreyfus and flees to exile in England.

1906 Dreyfus is finally exonerated, and his rank is restored.

1914–18 World War I rips apart Europe. The Germans are defeated.

1940 German troops invade Paris. The French government, under Marshal Pétain, evacuates to Vichy, while the French Resistance under General Charles de Gaulle maintains symbolic headquarters in London.

1944 Allied troops liberate Paris; de Gaulle returns in triumph.

1952 The creation, with Germany, of the ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community), the precursor of the modern European Union.

1954–62 War begins in Algeria and is eventually lost. Refugees flood Paris, and the nation becomes divided over its North African policies.

1958 France's Fourth Republic collapses; General de Gaulle is called out of retirement to head the Fifth Republic.

1968 Paris's students and factory workers engage in a general revolt; the French government is overhauled in the aftermath.

1981 François Mitterrand is elected France's first Socialist president since the 1940s; he's re-elected in 1988.

1989 Paris celebrates the bicentenary of the French Revolution.

1992 Euro Disney (Disneyland Resort® Paris) opens.

1994 François Mitterrand and Queen Elizabeth II ride under the English Channel in the new Channel Tunnel.

2002 France replaces the Franc with the Euro, the new European currency.



The Orangerie is a must for Monet fans

and choice of subject never fails to impress. See p. 100.

Orangerie Monet fans should flock to this lovely museum, which showcases the Impressionist's famed lilies. See p. 55.

BEST SHOPS

Christian Constant Try the delicious ganaches at this award-winning chef's chocolate shop. See p. 165.

Grands Magasins Galeries Lafayette and Printemps department stores behind the Opéra Garnier are still winners for one-stop shopping with children in tow, selling men's, women's and children's fashion, homeware, jewellery, make-up, and toys. See p. 114.

Joué Club Village Inside the 19th-century covered Passage des Princes, this toy mega-store sells everything from cowboy

and Indian miniatures to modelling kits for aeroplanes, Lego, dolls, party costumes, and cuddly toys. See p. 114.

Nature & Découvertes This child-friendly and environmentally friendly chain sells all sorts of interesting objects, games, and gifts linked to nature and science. See p. 66.

Place de la Madeleine All around the Madeleine church, gourmet food shops stimulate hunger with truffles from La Maison de la Truffe, biscuits and foie gras from Fauchon, caviar from Caviar Kaspia, and exotic foods from Hédiard. See p. 64.

Poilâne Breadmakers since before World War II, Poilâne makes delicious organic loaves and biscuits in a traditional oven in the cellar. A small ball of dough is taken from one batch and put into the next, creating an un-interrupted link from the first Poilâne loaf to the one your family can buy today. See p. 164.

BEST FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT

Attending a ballet or opera

Let your family rub shoulders with the Paris literati at the **Opéra Bastille** (see p. 136) or *grande dame* of the music scene, the 19th-century rococo **Opéra Garnier** (see p. 100) Whether for a performance of Bizet or a men-only Swan Lake, dress with pomp and circumstance.

Going to the circus All things circus are lapped up big time in Paris. From lions, tigers, and bears (oh-my!) in the traditional Big Top (Cirque Pinder, see p. 248) to avant garde acrobatics in the Grande Céleste Cirque (see p. 248) or pioneering acts in the Cirque d'Hiver (see p. 135) – there's something for all the family.

Jazz clubs Paris and jazz go hand in hand. Try Autour de Midi-Minuit in Montmartre (see p. 115) or mosey on down to the Latin quarter where the golden age of jazz lives on in a handful of clubs. See p. 196.

BEST ACCOMMODATION

Aviatic Just off the beaten track near Montparnasse, this small, family-run hotel will pack you a picnic – ideal for lunch in the nearby Luxembourg gardens. See p. 168.

Hotel Valadon Right by Les Invalides and the Eiffel Tower,

this hotel is used to welcoming families with children of all ages. Budget travellers can store food in a communal fridge. See p. 90.

Le Crillon It was good enough for Ernest Hemingway, Pierce Brosnan, and Zinedine Zidane, and it's good enough for you. If you fancy a splurge, this place comes up trumps with excellent family facilities and a gourmet restaurant to die for. See p. 67.

Paris Oasis If you would like a self-catering apartment in the heart of Montmartre, these small but fully equipped flats even have a heated swimming pool you can use. See p. 117.

Résidence des Arts This family favourite is in a great location on the Left Bank and offers apartments with a kitchenette and space for three to four people. The next-door café also serves decent food should you decide to eat out. See p. 168.

BEST EATING OPTIONS

Breakfast in America Fine crispy bacon, pancakes in maple syrup, perfect burgers, fries, and milkshakes make this a sought-after address in the Marais, and one worth queuing at, for week-end brunch or all-day-breakfast. See p. 147.

Coco & Co Eggs in every shape, size and form are the



Sleeping Beauty Castle, Disneyland

only foodstuffs served in this hip café. Opt for a boiled egg, an omelette, or *oeuf-en-cocotte* (egg baked with wine and cream), but expect perf'egg-tion! See p. 172.

Le Potager du Marais If you or your children are vegetarians (and even if you're not) taste reigns supreme in this restaurant that does things with vegetables unlike anywhere else in the capital. See p. 147.

Memère Paulette Large portions prevail in this reasonably priced local's haunt, which feels like its décor (as well as the menus) haven't changed since the 1940s. See p. 120.

Nos Ancêtres les Gaulois Pretend you're Astérix or Obélix in this fun restaurant where meat is cooked as in medieval times and wine is poured straight from the barrel. See p. 199.

BEST DAYS OUT

Disneyland Mickey Mouse and the cartoon legends created by Walt Disney make this theme park one of the most fun things to do in Île-de-France. See p. 201.

Parc Astérix For a truly French theme park, Astérix the Gaul's hangout won't disappoint children of any age. Watch the fabulous dolphin shows, get wet on the log-flumes, and shake with fear and anticipation on the rickety-looking wooden roller-coasters – some of the biggest in Europe. See p. 245.

Versailles The Sun King's palace is not only an architectural wonder; its grounds are big enough to spend several hours in and are particularly atmospheric when the fountains spring to life and classical music is played. Les Grandes Eaux Musicales, see p. 249.