



The Venus de Milo glimpsed amid a moving throng in the Louvre Museum.

1 THE BEST OF FREE & DIRT CHEAP PARIS

Most of us are wary of fabulous bargains, convinced that some unidentified small print will leap up and bite us at any moment. But Parisians are very lucky—despite the city’s reputation as a bastion of luxury, it also offers an endless supply of cheapies and freebies to get through (575 of which are in this book), from open-air film festivals and free kayaking along the Canal Saint-Martin, to budget dinners and complimentary concerts. And Paris’s compact size means you don’t have to go far to find a bargain. Exhausted the freebies in one *arrondissement*? Just stroll over to the next.

1 Best Entertainment Bets

- **Best Free Concerts and Cheap Booze:** Music-lovers of all sorts meet over a swift *bière* or three at **L'International** (5/7 Rue Moret, 75011; ☎ **01 49 29 76 45**), revered for its eclectic programme of live music that includes *chanson*, rock, indie, pop, electro, hip hop and folk. It's a welcome addition to the scene, with free entry and a host of exciting bands. See p. 81.
- **Best Open-Air Film Festival:** Drive-ins are logistically not possible in Paris, but picnic-ins are. Between mid-July and mid-August, just 1€ gets you into the Parc de la Villette's Cinéma en Plein Air film festival (Prairie du Triangle, 211 Ave. Jean-Jaurès, 75019), where cult movies are projected onto Europe's biggest inflatable movie screen and locals turn up in their thousands, picnic basket and blankets in hand. See p. 23.
- **Best Place for Half-Price Theatre Tickets:** Paris might not be Broadway or the West End, but it's got a thriving theatre scene that sees everything from slapstick French comedy to experimental dance, absurdist drama and classic vaudeville. **Le Kiosque Théâtre**, at Place de la Madeleine (75008), Place des Ternes (75011) and in front of the Montparnasse train station (75014) sells half-price tickets for same-night shows. See p. 36.
- **Best Free Jazz Awards Ceremony:** **Le Sunset-Sunside** (60 Rue des Lombards, 75001; ☎ **01 40 26 46 60**) has seen more great jazz musicians pass through its door since 1983 than most Parisians have had hot croissants. In early September a few more of them—up-and-comers, mostly—fight it out here over three free nights. See p. 30.
- **Best Free Radio Gig:** Journalist Isabelle Dhordain invites three of France's top popsters for a live radio show of mix 'n' match *chanson*, pop and rock. The **Pont des Artistes** is open to the public most Wednesdays and is a fine occasion to see the stars of French pop and *chanson* (Maison de Radio France, 116 Ave. du Président Kennedy, 75016; ☎ **32 30** (0.34€/min)). See p. 28.
- **Best Free Classical Music Lunch:** Thursday lunchtimes need never be dull again thanks to the exquisite **Petit Palais** (Ave. Winston Churchill, 75008;

☎ 01 53 43 40 00), which aside from being a top-notch fine arts museum holds free lunchtime music concerts in conjunction with the Radio France programme *D'Une Rive à l'Autre* (12.30–1.30pm, October–June). See p. 30.

- **Best Ballet Setting:** When in *gai* Paris, one must embrace the literati. Nowhere can you rub shoulders with more of them

so enjoyably than at the gorgeous **Opéra Garnier** (Place de l'Opéra, 75009; ☎ 08 92 89 90 90), the iconic 19th-century structure that inspired the tale of the Phantom of the Opera, the structure of which is frequently likened to a wedding cake. Whilst the upper-crust pays for the top spots (around 80–100€), cheap seats can be bought from just 5€! See p. 226.

2 Best Cheap Eats

- **Best Free Couscous:** On Friday and Saturday nights, Samir, owner of **La Choppe** (40 Rue de Clignancourt, 75018; ☎ 01 46 06 20 10) serves lashings of scrumptious couscous to anyone who has bought a drink (from 8:30pm). See p. 55.
- **Best New York-Style Investment of 2.50€:** For cheap protein and a quick burst of “God Bless America”, head to **La Mosaïque** (corner of Rue du Roi de Sicile and Rue Vieille du Temple, 75004), which sells tasty hotdogs dripping in all the right ketchup and mustard. See p. 62.
- **Best Fast-Food Alternative: Chibby's Diner** (9 Rue Jaucourt, 75012; ☎ 01 44 73 98 18) is a cool, 1950s-style diner off the beaten track, with lip-smackingly good burgers at seriously affordable prices. See p. 67.
- **Best Luxury (but Cheap) Pâtisserie:** No *pain au chocolat* can top **Ladurée's** (75 Ave. des Champs-Élysées, 75008; ☎ 01 40 75 08 75), especially their pistachio version striped with pistachio paste and rich chocolate. See p. 162.
- **Best Romantic Investment of 15€:** When *l'amour* is in zee air (and even when it isn't), Anne and Sébastien's wine bar **Rouge Passion** (14 Rue Jean-Baptiste Pigalle, 75009; ☎ 01 42 85 07 62) is a perfect setting for sharing cheese and cold-meat platters (15€) over a vintage from the downstairs cellar (from 4€). See p. 78.
- **Best Throwback to la Vieille France:** Have you just stepped back in time, or are you in a larger-than-life comic book? Dining at **Chez Maurice** (26 Rue

des Vinaigriers, 75010; ☎ **01 46 07 07 91**)—one of the last family-run, red-gingham bistros on the block—is a lesson in cheap eating (three-course menus from 9.50€ to 19€). It's also home to some of the most colourful characters you'll ever set eyes on. See p. 60.

- **Best Chinese Food Ever:** The chefs at **Les Pâtes Vivantes** (46 Rue du Faubourg Montmartre, 75009; ☎ **01 45 23 10 21**) chop off long spaghetti-like ropes of noodles in front of your eyes—a novel touch that becomes even more impressive once you've tasted the deliciously perfumed dishes. Food is dirt-cheap (around 9€ for a huge main, 11€ and 13€ *prix fixe* menus), but if you can come on your birthday, it's free! See p. 64.
- **Best Currywurst and Beer:** A funky Franco-German number off the Bastille Ledru-Rollin drag, **Café Titon** (34 Rue Titon, 75011; ☎ **09 53 17 94 10**) serves the best (okay, the only) German currywurst in Paris (5.50€), best washed down with a beer (3.50€). Its French cuisine is top too: just 10€ for the *plat du jour* and a coffee at lunchtime. See p. 56.
- **Best Cheap Oysters:** Seafood and eat it at **La Dame des Huîtres** fish-stand (86 Rue Lemer cier, 75017; ☎ **01 46 27**

81 12) where a platter of 12 oysters fresh off the boat from Brittany will only set you back 16€. Perfect with a smooth glass of white. See p. 57.

- **Best Lunchtime Splurge:** A jewel-incrusted red carpet and an oversized crystal chandelier set the tone for a meal at **Baccarat's Cristal Room** (11 Place des Etats-Unis, 75116; ☎ **01 40 22 11 10**). The grandeur of the surroundings is reassuringly matched by chef Thomas L'Hériss on's top-class cuisine, which at lunchtime will set you back around 55€ for two courses—an affordable splurge that also gives you free access to the glistening Baccarat museum. See p. 71.
- **Best Honest French Bistro:** **Chez Prosper** (7 Ave. du Trône, 75011; ☎ **01 43 73 08 51**) heaves day and night—the sign of a good eating place. So what's the formula? Just a vibrant atmosphere, speedy service and hearty, honest food at low prices (9€–15€). See p. 57.
- **Best Pizza Experience:** Quirky pizzas (think goats' cheese and sliced duck breast or bacon and pineapple chutney) made from organic ingredients, delivered to your chosen picnic spot by the Canal Saint-Martin—two good reasons to go to the funky **Pink**

Flamingo (67 Rue Bichat, 75010; ☎ 01 42 02 31 70). See p. 70.

- **Best Vegetarian Restaurant:** In the all-veggie **Potager du Marais** (22 Rue Rambuteau,

75004; ☎ 01 42 74 24 66), unadventurous rabbit food is prohibited in favour of genuinely flavoursome vegetarian cuisine, several dishes of which are gluten-free. See p. 69.

3 Best Drinking & Partying

- **Best Cheap Bar Crawl:** The whole area is artfully decayed, but for dusk 'til dawn festivities (and drinks from just 3€), you can't do better than the shabby-chic bars, restaurants and clubs of the **Rue Oberkampf** (75011), Paris's ultimate, cheapskater's night out. See p. 75.
- **Best Left Bank Café: La Palette** (43 Rue de Seine, 75006; ☎ 01 43 26 68 15) encompasses everything that is stereotypically Left Bank—intellectual punters, frescoes on the walls and ceilings, good food and romance—and turns them into something wholly unique. See p. 76.
- **Best Funky Surprise Bar:** Nation is hardly party central, yet hidden on a residential street behind the Monoprix supermarket, **Les Pères Populaires** (46 Rue de Buzenval, 75020; ☎ 01 43 48 49 22) entertains nighthawks with generous measures of cheap alcohol (wine 2€, beer 2.40€) and hip tunes into the wee hours. See p. 77.
- **Best Wine Bar:** Wine buffs fight for one of just four tables at the

Le Baron Rouge (1 Rue Théophile Roussel, 75012; ☎ 01 43 43 14 32), known for its 50-strong wine list and animated evenings, when punters spill out onto the street around the Marché Aligre. See p. 78.

- **Best Multidisciplinary Party Den:** Set inside France's first cooperative building, **La Bellevilloise** (19 Rue Boyer, 75020; ☎ 01 46 36 07 07) reels in more people than the surrounding bars put together, with its numerous drinking holes, restaurants, club, exhibition space and concert hall. The cherry on the cake is that many events are free. See p. 79.
- **Best Floating Party Boat:** Rocking takes on a whole different meaning on the **Batofar** (11 Quai François Mauriac, 75013; ☎ 09 71 25 50 61)—a converted lighthouse boat that has been making waves on Paris's night scene for the last few years, maintaining its reputation with a constant stream of top French and international DJs. See p. 79.

- **Best Live Electro Rock and Pop Venue:** For music-lovers, **Nouveau Casino** (109 Rue Oberkampf, 75011; ☎ 01 43 57 57 40) is a cherished, albeit

commercial venue with great acoustics and an A-list of acts and DJs who splice rock, dub, garage, rock and pop into the wee hours. See p. 79.

4 Best Living Wisely

- **Best Free Lectures:** You won't find a finer setting for your free lectures than the majestic **Collège de France** (11 Place Marcelin Berthelot, 75005; ☎ 01 44 27 12 11). Neither will you find a more impressive crop of experts teaching the public subjects, including maths, astrophysics, chemistry, philosophy, and mediaeval literature. See p. 112.
- **Best Free Dance Classes:** From June to September the banks of the Seine below the Institut du Monde Arabe become an open-air dance floor for wannabe dirty-dancers who come to learn salsa, Argentinean tango and rock 'n' roll. Square Tino Rossi, 75005. <http://tangoargentineric.site.voila.fr>.
- **Best Relaxing Massage:** At **Serenity Passport** (63 Rue Victor Hugo, 92300 Levallois-Perret; ☎ 01 47 37 56 59 or 06 11 91 09 38), Stéphane's healing hands have mastered Indian and Tibetan massaging techniques to replenish your energies and loosen your tightened muscles. The Tibetan singing bowls are a

weird but wholly relaxing experience whereby the bowls resonate at frequencies that traverse your body.

- **Best Cheap Sleep Under 100€ a Night:** Who needs a mint on their pillow and a 300€ bill when you can stay at trendy **Mama Shelter** (109 Rue de Bagnolet, 75020; ☎ 01 43 48 48 48) in the villagey Saint-Blaise *quartier* from 90€ a night per room. For your moolah, you get an iMac computer, CD and DVD player and free WiFi in the room, plus oodles of street cred.
- **Best Really Cheap Sleep Under 50€:** As far as youth hostels go, **St Christopher's Inn** (159 Rue de Crimée, 75019; ☎ 01 40 34 34 40) rocks. Not satisfied with just cleaning up the area (on the old industrial Canal de l'Ourcq), it provides hip décor, a happening bar (in the men's loo the urinals are shaped like women's lips) and has excellent bedrooms (single-sex and mixed) for an average of 26€ per person/night.
- **Best Free Haircut:** For locks *en vogue* head to the **Académie**

Jean-Yves Bouley (156 Blvd. Saint-Germain, 75006; ☎ **01 53 10 82 31**), where students cut and colour men and women's

hair for free on Mondays and Tuesdays (call for an appointment).

5 Best Shopping

- **Best Vintage Clothes Hunting:** Compared to other countries, France caught onto the vintage bandwagon late in the day. But **Vertiges et Rag** (83/85 Rue Saint-Martin, 75004; ☎ **01 48 87 34 64**) makes up for lost time with some of the best and cheapest selections of vintage-wear Paris has to offer.
- **Best Funky Second-Hand Furniture:** The **Depôt-vente Rue de Lagny** (81 Rue de Lagny, 75020; ☎ **01 43 48 86 64**) brings the price of desirable antique furniture down to levels real people can afford.
- **Best English-Language Bookshop:** For book signings, poetry readings, hours flicking through second-hand books and an annual literature festival that attracts more than 5,000 visitors, there's only one address: **Shakespeare & Co** (37 Rue de la Bûcherie, 75005; ☎ **01 43 25 40 93**).
- **Best Affordable Award-Winning Chocolatier:** The best-quality chocolate in Paris is sold by **François Pralus** (35 Rue Rambuteau, 75004; ☎ **01 48 04 05 05**)—voted best *chocolatier* by Gault & Millau—who supplies his shop with cacao from his own organic plantation in north Madagascar.
- **Best Department Store for Tightwads:** Mention **Tati** (4 Blvd. de Rochechouart, 75018; ☎ **01 55 29 52 20**) to Parisians and you'll get mixed reactions. Some shopping snobs (no matter how frugal) won't set foot there, others swear by it. Whatever your opinion, its ranges and prices are unbeatable.

6 Best Exploring

- **Best Free Bike Tour:** The City of Lights is an adventure in itself, but especially at night, when its lights sparkle. Every Friday night at 9.30pm, around 300 nighthawks gather in front of the Mairie de Paris (Hôtel de Ville, 75004) on their bicycles for a 3-hour nocturnal sightseeing tour. (www.parisrandovelo.com.) See p. 131.

Paris's Top Five Best-Kept Free Secrets

- 1 At the beginning of the 20th century the Théâtre de la Ville went by a whole other name: Le Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, named after its beautiful actress owner. What very few people realise is that **Sarah's dressing room** (Théâtre de la Ville, 2 Place du Châtelet, 75004; ☎ **01 48 87 54 42**) has been meticulously preserved and can be visited for free, by appointment only, during the *entr'acte* of a performance. Despite works done on the theatre in 1968, which robbed us of her lounge, anteroom and bathroom, you'll find the remaining parts (wooden panels, Empire-style mouldings, a sofa decorated with a sphinx, a bathtub and a mercury cast mirror) wonderfully intriguing.
- 2 Marie Curie's contribution to science and research into radioactivity earned her a posthumous place in Paris's prestigious Panthéon, and her museum, the **Musée Curie** (1 Rue Pierre et Marie Curie, 75005; ☎ **01 56 24 55 31**), is where all of her Nobel prize-winning research took place. Today it makes for a short but fascinating visit—a safe one too, apparently, since the place was decontaminated.
- 3 At first glance the **Musée de la Préfecture de Police** (Hôtel de Police du 5ème arr., 4 Rue de la Montagne-Ste-Geneviève, 75005

• **Best Peaceful Museum with a Tearoom:** All municipal museums in Paris are free, but for an unrivalled setting, hidden from the rest of the world, the **Musée de la Vie Romantique** (16 Rue Chaptal, 75009; ☎ **01 55 31 95 67**) takes the biscuit. A charming 18th-century mansion that once housed Rossini, Chopin, George Sand and Delacroix, it has a rose garden and a summer tearoom where decadence is yours for the price of a cuppa. See p. 182.

• **Best Romantic Garden for Canoodling:** You're in the thick of touristy Paris near Les Invalides, but an oasis of calm is at your disposal, with tree-lined alleys and pristine lawns freckled with some of Rodin's most famous sculptures. The **Musée Rodin's** gardens (79 Rue de Varenne, 75007; ☎ **01 44 18 61 10**), which can be accessed for just 1€, are arguably the most romantic spot in the city. See p. 196.

(2nd floor); ☎ **01 44 41 52 50**) looks a little old and musty, but you'll soon realise that it all adds to the intrigue of the objects on show: Old arrest warrants, nooses, murderous machines and gruesome-looking weapons—all part of our city's violent underbelly from the 19th century to today.

- 4 The **Serres d'Auteuil** greenhouses (1 Ave. Gordon Bennett, 75016; ☎ **01 40 71 74 00**) are almost the spitting image of the Grand Palais's glass roof—a fabulous example of 19th-century ingenuity worthy of a visit in their own right. Plant-lovers should also come along to see the 5,000 species of tropical and sub-tropical plants.
- 5 Paris's underbelly is a veritable Swiss cheese that has been used over the years for mining, mushroom farming and the metro. Under the Hôpital Cochin, you can visit part of that network at the **Ecomusée des Anciennes Carrières des Capucins** (Hôpital Cochin, Rue du Faubourg Saint-Jacques, 75014; ☎ **01 43 89 78 03**)—a 1.2km section lovingly attended to by the SEADACC, an association of devotees who take you past wells, fountains and interesting graffiti by appointment.

● **Best Bohemian Afternoon Walk:**

The old Canal Saint-Martin (75010) ran through central Paris, lined with empty warehouses, dishevelled cafés and masses of housing potential. This was too much for any self-respecting bohemian to refuse, and nowadays the waterway bustles with shabby-chic bars, restaurants, bistros and boutiques, making it the ultimate haunt for anyone looking to study the Parisian race of *bobos* (Bourgeois-Bohemians)

and perhaps become one for the evening. See p. 272.

● **Best Free Hidden Museum:**

Rodin's star pupil Antoine Bourdelle is the subject of the **Musée Bourdelle** (16–18 Rue Antoine Bourdelle, 75015; ☎ **01 49 54 73 73**), a treasure-trove that contains the artist's old workshop and some spectacular larger-than-life statues which feel like mythological giants about to awake from a 1,000-year slumber. See p. 180.