

## PART FIVE

# GETTING AROUND

## **VISUALIZING** *the* **CITY**

PARIS POSSESSES THE QUIANT CONTRADICTION of being organized according to no specific system or grid, but at the same time it has been developed on a scale that makes aimless exploring pleasurable without the risk of getting too lost. In essence, streets can be small, mixed up, and obscure, but the city is user-friendly. You can always situate yourself in Paris by using the closest Métro stop as your mental and geographic crutch. Everything in Paris is accessible by the Métro—the veins through which the life of the city flows—and the system will inevitably become your best friend. Find a Métro station and you'll never be lost or too far from anything. You'll quickly get to know your Métro stop and a few local cafés, which you'll keep coming back to each day. Comfort and pleasure in Paris builds as you settle into these little routines. The other reference point is of course the Seine, the river that runs east-west across the city.

Using our arrondissement map in the Introduction, memorize the key areas of Paris and where they are in relation to each other and your hotel. This way, you'll always have your bearings, wherever you are. Memorize your closest Métro stop, the line that it's on, and the *direction* (the last station on the line heading in the direction of your hotel).

### **PARIS PRATIQUE**

We've mentioned on several occasions how to find free city and Métro maps. These will help you get around, except when you're looking for an obscure shop in the 13th arrondissement or a little bistro that a friend raved about in the 12th arrondissement. With one of these handy map books, you'll be able to track down every street in Paris and its closest Métro stop. And as a tourist, you'll look like a local. You can find a selection of L'Indispensable map books in all

**unofficial TIP**

To get the shape of Paris clear in your head, think of a large egg lying on its side. The RATP public-transportation authority uses the shape of the city as its logo, with the path of the Seine River forming the profile of a face.

stationery shops, most newsstands, and department stores priced from about €4.50 to €20.50 for a deluxe edition with waterproof cover. Michelin publishes a similar spiral-bound one for around €10. Trust us, this is a great value—you'll get very attached to your map book very quickly and will want to keep it for return journeys.

The arrondissements are organized clockwise in concentric circles starting in the city center. The street signs are posted on the corner of buildings and most of the time indicate the arrondissement as well as the street.

## SPOTTING THE EIFFEL TOWER

“WHERE'S THE EIFFEL TOWER?” HOW OFTEN do we hear this of arriving visitors? For many, you're not really in Paris until you've spotted the world's most famous monument. Go quench the urge right away. If this is your first time in Paris, the single most dominant image in your mind is surely this spectacular hunk of metal. Most visitors don't feel like going to the Louvre or the Picasso Museum until they've first laid eyes on this larger-than-life icon, situated on the Left Bank of the Seine on a long and elegant garden called the Champ de Mars, in the 15th arrondissement. Aside from climbing it, the absolute best viewing point during the day—and especially at night—is from the terrace at the Trocadéro on the Right Bank. To get to the Eiffel Tower, take either Line 6 of the Métro to the Bir-Hakeim station or Line C of the RER to the Champ-de-Mars–Tour Eiffel stop. For more information you can call ☎ 01 44 11 23 23 or visit [www.tour-eiffel.fr](http://www.tour-eiffel.fr).

## WALKING IN PARIS

THE BEST WAY TO EXPERIENCE PARIS IS BY foot (*à pied* [ah pee ay]). The human scale of Paris permits you to move easily from the Latin Quarter, across the islands, into the Marais, along the rue de Rivoli, past the Louvre, along the Seine, over the Pont Neuf, and into the Saint-Germain-des-Prés area and back to your centrally located hotel without any problem at all. Pause for lunch and stop in at least once or twice for a coffee or glass of beer or wine in an inviting café.

*Note:* Traffic signals do not hang in the middle of intersections but are affixed to poles on the far side of intersections. Green and red have the usual universal meanings. Parisians are not a highly disciplined people, but they are not jaywalkers either. Don't cross in the middle of streets, and do not ignore street signs like New Yorkers do. Drivers are not used to irresponsible pedestrians and do not usually slow down for them.

## STREET ADDRESSES

IN PARIS, STREET SIGNS ARE FIXED TO THE sides of buildings, much higher than eye level. Traditional Parisian street signs are blue with green trim. The arrondissement is often shown above the name.

With regard to street numbers, don't be surprised if odd and even numbers are not located opposite from each other on a street. Many Paris buildings have long and deep courtyards and passageways leading from the street. You'll often see numbers followed by *bis* or *ter*, like "37 bis" or "104 ter," simply indicating that this address is adjacent to number 37 or 104.

# PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN PARIS IS EXTENSIVE, inexpensive, safe, and easy to use. Even if you've never used public transportation back home, or you're afraid you'll get lost or squeezed to death in crowds, in Paris, trust the RATP and use it—especially the Métro. The Métro will not only save you valuable time and lots of money, but it will quickly bring you to the heart of everyday Parisian life. The RATP also has an extensive public-bus system with multiple lines crisscrossing the city that links neighborhoods between Métro stops. And you might also want to try the affiliated Bat-o-Bus, which hosts regular river traffic on the Seine.

The RATP has a 24-hour telephone hotline for all questions concerning rates, itineraries, and hours. To reach a human being who speaks some English, call between 6 a.m. and 9 p.m.; you may need to ask for an English-speaking agent (☎ 08 92 68 77 14); otherwise you'll only get recorded messages in French. You can also check their site (in English) at [www.ratp.fr](http://www.ratp.fr).

## THE MÉTRO

THE BACKBONE OF THE RATP NETWORK is the **Métro**, one of the world's greatest subway systems, which was inaugurated in 1900 with the Porte de Vincennes–Porte Maillot Métropolitain line (hence the name "Métro"). Today the Métro includes 16 lines and a whopping 297 stations. Essentially every neighborhood in Paris is accessible by Métro. The Métro opens at 5:30 a.m. and closes around 1 a.m.—but don't cut it too close. Ask at the Métro station closest to your hotel when the last Métro runs. (*Excusez-moi, c'est quand le dernier Métro ce soir, s'il vous plaît?* [Ex cu say **mwa**; say **cah** wn luh dare **nyeh** Métro suh swah, see voo **play**?])

Each Métro line has an assigned number and is commonly referred to by the last station at the end of its line or direction. Each line is also color-coded, but with 16 different lines, you'll find the numbers a better indicator. The colors help you follow a line across the map.

You'll want to pick up a map of the Métro and RER and keep it handy all the time. Free maps are available at all Métro and RER stations, as well as at the RATP information office in the massive Châtelet–Les Halles station, which acts as the central hub for the system and is the major intersection of numerous lines. You can also download a printed Métro map on the official RATP Web site at [www.ratp.fr](http://www.ratp.fr) or directly on to your PDA, if you use one. In addition, the Galeries Lafayette and Samaritaine department stores print and distribute millions of copies of colorful city and Métro maps, which are distributed free in their stores and at hundreds of points of contact for tourists.

### MÉTRO LINES

Line 1	Château de Vincennes	La Défense
Line 2	Nation	Porte Dauphine
Line 3	Gallieni	Pont de Levallois–Bécon
Line 3	bis Porte des Lilas	Gambetta
Line 4	Porte de Clignancourt	Porte d'Orléans
Line 5	Bobigny–Pablo Picasso	Place d'Italie
Line 6	Nation	Charles de Gaulle–Étoile
Line 7	La Courneuve	Mairie d'Ivry/Villejuif–Louis Aragon
Line 7	bis Pré-Saint-Gervais	Louis Blanc
Line 8	Créteil Préfecture	Ballard
Line 9	Mairie de Montreuil	Pont de Sèvres
Line 10	Gare d'Austerlitz	Boulogne Pont de Saint-Cloud–Porte d'Auteuil
Line 11	Mairie des Lilas	Châtelet
Line 12	Porte de la Chapelle	Mairie d'Issy
Line 13	Châtillon-Montrouge	Gabriel Péri–Asnières Gennevilliers–Saint-Denis Université
Line 14	St Lazare	Bibliothèque François Mitterrand

### MÉTRO TICKET PRICES

Single ticket, €1.40

*Carnet* (ten tickets), €10.50

*Mobilis* (one-day unlimited travel), €5.30 (1–2 zones) to €18.40 (1–8 zones)

### PARIS VISITE PASS

	ONE-DAY		TWO-DAY	
	ADULTS	CHILDREN	ADULTS	CHILDREN
1–3 zones:	€8.35	€4.55	€13.70	€6.85
1–5 zones:	€16.75	€8.35	€26.65	€12.95
1–8 zones:	€23.60	€11.40	€34.30	€16.75

	THREE-DAY		FIVE-DAY	
	ADULTS	CHILDREN	ADULTS	CHILDREN
1–3 zones:	€18.25	€9.15	€26.65	€13.70
1–5 zones:	€37.35	€18.25	€45.70	€22.85
1–8 zones:	€42.65	€21.30	€53.35	€26.65

*Children ages 4–11 pay half price; children under age 4 travel free.*

**Zones 1–3** include Paris and its nearby suburbs (La Défense, Saint-Denis Université, Le Bourget).

**Zones 1–5** include Paris and the surrounding area (Versailles, Charles de Gaulle and Orly Airports, and Disneyland Paris at Marne la Vallée).

**Charles de Gaulle Airport (Roissy)** is in Zone 5 and costs €7.85 each way.

**Orly Airport** is in Zone 4 and, via OrlyVal, costs €8.85 each way.

**Disneyland Paris** is in Zone 5; the special Disneyland Passport offers round-trip service for €41 adults, €33 children (ages 3 to 11, under age 3 free).

**Versailles** is in Zone 4 and costs €2.60 each way.

**Saint-Germain-en-Laye** is in Zone 4 and costs €3.30 each way.

### Distances in Time

To determine how long it will take you to get from one station to another, roughly count on between one and two minutes per station, and add five minutes for each change of line (*correspondance*) you need to make. The high-speed RER trains come less frequently than the Métros but are faster and stop less. You can get from the center of the city at Châtelet–Les Halles to the Arc de Triomphe in less than 10 minutes by RER, which would take twice as long by Métro.

### Buying Métro Tickets

Métro tickets will be one of your staple tools for navigating in Paris. You have several ticket options, depending largely on how long you are staying and how many times you think you'll be using the Métro, RER, or buses. Paris public transportation is organized into eight zones, each commanding its own fare, so a little calculating is necessary to make the best choice.

All public transportation (Métro, RER, and buses) within Paris city limits and all the Métro stops on all 16 lines (even those that go beyond the city limits) collectively constitute Zones 1 and 2 and require only one Métro ticket. Almost all of your travel, except perhaps to one of the airports or Disneyland Paris, will fall within these two zones. You can buy tickets one at a time as you go, in a packet of ten called a *carte*, or as a special one-, two-, three-, or five-day visitors pass called the **Paris Visite**. Prices do change periodically, so they might be a little different from what is listed here, but changes will be minimal and proportional.

**unofficial TIP**

If you plan to use the RER between either airport and Paris, or to and from Disneyland Paris, it is definitely a good deal to buy a Paris Visite upon arrival. If you are not going to use public transportation to and from the airport or Disneyland Paris, you might consider simply buying a carnet of ten tickets at a time.

As you can quickly calculate, it is very advantageous to buy a Paris Visite in many cases. Not only will you save money, you won't have to spend time in lines, and you won't have to figure out how, when, or where to get tickets. And, best of all, you won't hesitate over how or if you should go somewhere. With the pass in hand, you're more likely to use it and really explore Paris.

**Advantages of the Paris Visite**

If you do opt for the Paris Visite you'll receive the following benefits:

**BATEAUX PARISIENS** 50 percent off second ticket when purchasing two cruises.

**CANAUXRAMA** One free canal-trip ticket for every adult ticket purchased (offer not valid on weekend afternoons or on public holidays).

**CITÉ DES SCIENCES** Admission discounted 25%.

**MUSÉE DU VIN** One free ticket for every adult ticket purchased.

**ÉTOILES DU REX** One free movie ticket for every adult ticket purchased.

**GALERIES LAFAYETTE** Discount of 10% on some items, plus free shopping bag with purchase of €30 or more.

**PARIS L'OPEN TOUR** Discount of 15% on tour tickets.

**MONTMARTRAIN** One free ticket for every adult ticket purchased.

**MUSÉE GREVIN** Admission discounted 25%.

**JACQUEMART ANDRÉ MUSEUM** One free ticket for every adult museum ticket purchased.

**RESTAURANT CHEZ CLEMENT** Free cocktail when ordering a meal at one of their nine Paris restaurants.

**STADE DE FRANCE** Admission discounted 25%.

**TOUR MONTPARNASSE** Admission discounted 35%.

**Where to Purchase a Paris Visite**

It's simple. Just go to almost any Métro or RER station ticket window and ask for a Paris Visite for the number of days and number of zones you wish. In all stations you'll be able to pay with your credit card. You don't need a photo or any identification, and you can buy the card on any day and begin using it on any other day. It automatically activates the first time you insert it into the turnstile.

You can buy your card at the RER station at either airport, and you can even buy it from a ticket machine with your Visa or MasterCard and PIN number, which will save you time.

## How to Use the Métro

**THE TURNSTILE** The Métro is very easy to use once you've mastered the symbols employed to indicate exits, transfers, and train directions. After you've bought your tickets or a pass, you slip the green ticket into the slot in the turnstile. The machine will grab it and spit it out in another slot. You grab it and proceed through the turnstile. Keep your ticket until you exit the Métro system because you may be asked to show it while you're in transit. In the case of the RER, you'll need to reinsert the ticket to get past the turnstile at your exit, so don't lose it; if you do, you'll either have to explain, beg, jump over the turnstile, or pay a fine.

You will observe a number of people "cheating"—climbing over the turnstile, going in the exit door, or squeezing through the turnstile with another passenger (often strangers). Someone may even squeeze in behind you without asking. The RATP has *contrôleur* dragnets set up periodically throughout the system, attempting to catch or deter cheaters.

If you lose your ticket and have the bad luck of being noticed by a *contrôleur*, try to explain what happened. Most likely you'll gain no sympathy and have to either pay the €35 fine on the spot, or show your passport and agree to have a €22 ticket mailed to you at home in addition to the fine, with a copy sent to your consulate.

 **unofficial TIP**  
If you're caught going through a turnstile together on one ticket, be ready for a whopping €45 fine for each of you.

**FOLLOW YOUR DIRECTION** Métro lines are named after their endpoints, that is, the Line 4 going north to Porte de Clignancourt is called Direction Porte de Clignancourt; the same line traveling in the opposite direction is called Direction Porte d'Orléans. Once you know which line your stop is located on, head in the direction of the last station on that line. White signs on the platform indicate direction.

**TRANSFERRING FROM ONE LINE TO ANOTHER: CORRESPONDANCE** For transferring from one line to another, color-coded signs on the *quai* (platform) marked "Correspondance" indicate the path to other platform *quais* and other directions. This may be confusing because you sometimes need to follow the *correspondance* sign for your line through long corridors, moving sidewalks, and along platforms of other lines.

Make sure your direction is marked on the sign hanging above the platform at which you end up waiting. If you happen to get on a Métro going the wrong way, don't panic. Get off at the next stop and cross over to the platform marked with the correct direction.

**SORTIE (EXIT)/ACCÈS AUX QUAIS (ENTRANCE)** Blue signs marked "Sortie" point you in the direction of the exit, and often you'll have a choice of exits, all emerging onto different streets or different sides of the street. When meeting friends at a Métro station, make sure to

specify which exit and whether you will meet underground or above ground. In every big station, you will find a *plan du quartier* (neighborhood map) on the platform, but all Métro stops have maps at the ticket-office exit. When with a group, if one of you gets left behind, a good policy is to get off at the next stop and wait for your friend to arrive, and then continue on together.

**A TIP ON AVOIDING LONG TRANSFERS** If you are changing from one Métro line to another, study your options to reduce the number of changes and stops you need to make to reach your destination. If you can avoid transferring at Châtelet and Montparnasse, you may be avoiding a very long walk through an endless corridor with a moving sidewalk.

### First Class

First class in the Métro was abolished in the mid-1980s under the Socialist government. You may still find some RER cars marked first class. Just ignore the numbers and sit where you'd like. The SNCF trains still maintain a first-class service category, however.

### Street People/Beggars/Musicians

For years the Paris Métro has been home to an odd mix of down-and-out individuals, street musicians, beggars, Gypsies, winos, and street people (called *clochards*). Quite often you'll spot a sad-looking person sitting on the cement in the Métro with a handwritten sign stating his or her story or problem—"J'ai faim [I'm hungry]," "54 ans, trois enfants, et sans travail [54 years old, three children, and out of work]," "SVP, donnez-moi une pièce ou deux [Please give me a coin or two]." The growing homeless population—referred to as SDF, for *sans domicile fixe*—of Paris publishes several magazines, guidebooks, crossword puzzles, and even a brief history of each Métro stop which are sold on the Métro cars. Musicians play a song or two and then file through the moving Métro with a hat or cup. Recent immigrants, typically women, will sit with quiet infants for hours waiting for handouts. Others will give a desperate speech and come around looking for a few coins or restaurant ticket. Don't feel intimidated or obliged to give anything. However, if you feel like helping someone, a few coins are always appreciated.

#### unofficial TIP

These solicitations may make you a bit uncomfortable at times, but, by and large, they do not represent any danger to passengers.

Occasionally in the past there have been small bands of Gypsy children roaming the Métro between Place de la Concorde and Étoile on Line 1 and in the train stations. They are seldom dangerous, but they are skilled pickpockets. They encircle their prey and distract them as one of them grabs the contents of pockets and purses. Hang on to everything, and don't be afraid to shoo them away.



## Getting Back to Your Hotel

If you memorize your Métro stop, you'll never get lost. We suggest that you keep a card from your hotel in your pocket in case you must ask someone for directions and your French accent is still a bit rusty.

## Heads Up: Keep to Your Right

When walking through the corridors, on the escalators, and along the long moving beltways in the Métro, the rule is for slower walkers to keep to the right. People have the right to pass you to your left.

## THE RER

THE RER (RÉSEAU EXPRESS RÉGIONAL) system—also run by the RATP—is the high-speed city-suburb network that in a short amount of time can zoom you across the city, out to Versailles or Saint-Germain-en-Laye, and even to Disneyland Paris. The aesthetics are very different from the Métro, since the stations are vast tunnels with deep platforms and the trains are fast and silent. Note that the Métros approach each platform from your left while most of the RER trains approach from your right. There are five lines on the RER (A, B, C, D, E), all forking out into numerous directions. Of course, the RER and Métro lines connect at various points, and although the RER is not designed to be used for very short distances, it makes longer distance traveling across the city or from city to suburb incredibly easy and efficient. Key junction (*correspondance*) stations are Châtelet–Les Halles, Nation, Étoile, and Auber. Don't confuse Charles de Gaulle–Étoile, where the Arc de Triomphe is located, with Roissy–Charles de Gaulle, the suburban site of the airport.

On the platform there are lit panels indicating the precise direction and list of stations the next train will be serving, as well as the expected time of arrival of the next train. All trains stop at all Paris stations. Be careful at Nation and Étoile stations not to board a train on the correct line but the wrong branch; otherwise, you'll have to circle back and pay another fare. Note that you can go to the Château de Vincennes Métro stop with one Métro ticket, but in order to get off the RER at Vincennes you'll need an additional fare. Controllers often stake out the Vincennes RER station, catching hordes of violators in their net.

The trains have funny four-letter names that are written in lights on the front of the first car. The stopping point for both the long and short trains is indicated by fixed signs suspended over the platforms at the points where the front (*tête*) and rear (*queue*) of the train will be when it stops. This is an important thing to notice, since you could be waiting for a train on the correct platform but be 100 meters behind or in front of the train's arrival point.

Unlike the Métro, when using the RER, keep your ticket handy since you'll need it to get out

### **unofficial TIP**

If you continue on past the city limits (Zones 1 and 2), your Métro ticket will not work in the exit turnstile, and you'll be forced to jump over the turnstile and risk a fine.

of the turnstile at your destination. You may use the RER like the Métro—with the exact same Métro ticket—when traveling within Paris. Other tickets are needed when going beyond the city limits. Be careful here.

Here is a list of RER lines and some of their routes:

RER A1	Saint-Germain-en-Laye
RER A2	Boissy Saint Léger
RER A3	Cergy le Haut
RER A4	Marne La Vallée
RER B2	Robinson
RER B3	Roissy—Aéroport Charles de Gaulle
RER B4	Saint-Rémy—lès-Chevreuse
RER B5	Mitry-Claye
RER C1	Pontoise
RER C2	Massy-Palaiseau
RER C3	Argenteuil
RER C4	Dourdan La Forêt
RER C5	Versailles RG
RER C6	Saint-Martin d'Etampes
RER C7	St. Quentin-en-Yvelines
RER C8	Versailles-Chantiers
RER D1	Orry-la-Ville-Coye
RER D2	Melun
RER D4	Malesherbes
RER E1	Hausmann St-Lazare
RER E2	Chelles Gournay
RER E4	Tournan

## BUSES

IT TAKES A WHILE TO GET THE HANG OF the buses and where they go. The great advantage to hopping on a bus is that you're above ground and can take in the scenery while you get where you're going.

Try using the public bus as an unofficial tour bus. There is nothing quite as glorious as sitting in the back of a city bus, unhurried, unlike the commuters, and watching the city—all included in the price of your single ticket or Paris Visite. The buses run on a kind of honor system. If you get on in the front, flash your *carte* at the driver. If you get on at the middle or back doors and you've got a single-use *carte*, there's nothing to do. If you are using Métro tickets, you must insert one in the validation machine located in the aisle. The machine validates your ticket and spits it back out, and you should keep it

until you get off. You may be asked to show it to *contrôleurs* who periodically make spot-checks on buses. If you have a Paris Visite, do not insert it in the machine. You can download the Paris bus plan from [www.ratp.fr](http://www.ratp.fr).

### Suggested Bus Routes

**BALABUS** On Sundays and public holidays from April through September, the RATP offers a sightseeing line from 12:30 to 8 p.m. The bus runs between La Défense and the Gare de Lyon and costs a total of four Métro tickets if you stay on for the whole journey.

**#63** We suggest catching this bus at Saint-Michel and riding it west, following the Left Bank of the Seine past the Latin Quarter, the Musée d'Orsay, the National Assembly, Invalides, and the view of the Louvre and Trocadéro. It then passes near the Eiffel Tower, where you should get off (Pont de l'Alma). When you're finished here, take the same #63 bus back in the other direction. The eastward route follows the Boulevard Saint-Germain past the chic Saint-Germain-des-Prés area, complete with galleries, shops, and the celebrated Café Flore, Brasserie Lipp, and Deux Magots, and continues past the Carrefour de l'Odéon. Hop off at the Roman ruins of Cluny just after you cross the Boulevard Saint-Michel, not far from where you got on.

**#82** Starts at Luxembourg Gardens, swings around the park to Montparnasse, then continues on past Les Invalides and École Militaire. The bus then passes under the Eiffel Tower, climbs up to Trocadéro, and continues out to Neuilly, ending at the famous Hôpital Américain.

**#85** Start at Luxembourg Gardens, heading north toward the Seine. The bus will follow the Boulevard Saint-Michel past the famous fountain, across the Seine and past the golden gates of the Palais de Justice and Notre-Dame Cathedral on its way to the dead center of Paris, Châtelet. From here it veers west past the Louvre before turning right and heading toward Pigalle and Montmartre.

Most Parisian buses stop running around 9 p.m., and many do not run on Sundays. During the day most buses run every five to ten minutes. You can verify the schedules in the bus shelters along the routes.

### Night Buses

For night owls who can't find a taxi, it's good to know that there are 18 night buses, called the **Noctambus** (marked by an illuminated owl sign), that leave the center of the city and follow the major arteries out to the edges of Paris in every direction. This keeps late-night party hounds from becoming stranded. Buses leave from Boulevard Victoria between Châtelet and the Hôtel de Ville beginning at 1:30 a.m. and every hour after that till about 5:30 a.m. The fare is €2.70, but if you have the Paris Visite it covers this service as well. The bus plan can be downloaded at [www.ratp.fr](http://www.ratp.fr).

## Bat-o-Bus

Traveling on the Seine is scenic but slow. The RATP offers an affiliated boat service called the Bat-o-Bus, which is a shuttle running from May through September, with five stops departing every 30 minutes between the Eiffel Tower and the Hôtel de Ville. It does not take Métro tickets, nor can you use your Paris Visite here, but it does offer an all-day pass for €10, allowing you to get on and off as often as you wish. For other Seine tours, refer to Part Six, Sightseeing, Tours, and Attractions.

Boarding points are found at:

- Tour Eiffel (Métro: Bir-Hakeim [Line 6]; RER: Champs de Mars [Line C])
- Musée d'Orsay (Métro: Solférino [Line 12])
- St.Germain-des-Prés (Métro: St Germain-des-Prés [Line 4])
- Notre-Dame (Métro: Cité [Line 4])
- Jardin des Plantes (Métro: Gare d'Austerlitz [Lines 7 or 10])
- Hôtel de Ville (Métro: Hôtel de Ville [Lines 1 or 11])
- Louvre (Métro: Palais Royal-Musée du Louvre [Lines 1 or 7])
- Champs Elysées (Métro: Champs Elysées–Clemenceau [Lines 1 or 13])

For more information, call ☎ 0 825 01 01 01 or visit [www.batobus.com](http://www.batobus.com).

## TAXIS

ALTHOUGH PARIS HAS ONE OF THE WORLD'S best subway systems, savvy visitors to the French capital need to master the ins and outs of *les taxis parisiens*. Taxis tend to be taxis, you're thinking, right? Well, almost. The quality of service is very uneven. You may have charming encounters with perfectly honest taxi drivers, or you may experience real grouches, or worse, the ones that "take you for a ride." The best protection is knowing where you're going and being alert.

If you're used to the frenzy of Manhattan and the competitive scuffs related to hailing cabs, chill out. In Paris, one rarely hails, whistles, flails at, or hustles cabs. Taxis are found at well-marked taxi stands scattered throughout the city. In fact, it is illegal for taxis to pick you up on the street if you're within at least 50 meters of an official taxi stand. Occasionally, you'll be able to jump into one in traffic, but this is a no-no and offenders risk heavy fines. So you've been warned.

Your other option is to call a taxi, and here you have a number of choices. If you're staying somewhere other than in a hotel where taxis usually line up and you use taxis regularly, it's wise and economical to note the telephone number of your nearest taxi stand. Why? Because in Paris the meter starts turning the moment you call, not the moment you hop into the backseat! When calling one of the citywide taxi companies, **Taxis Bleus** (☎ 0 891 70 10 10) or **G7** (☎ 01 47 39 47 39) for example, the dispatcher sends his or her closest available vehicle, but be prepared to find up to €8 already on the meter before the journey

begins. Although this seems obnoxious, don't complain. *C'est comme ça ici* (That's how it's done here.)

Paris has over 20,000 taxis on its streets, and drivers are strictly regulated by the police. You'll notice a small digital counter on the back ledge of each vehicle indicating how many hours this driver has been behind the wheel. Parisian taxis by law cannot *rouler* for more than ten hours a day. There are few moonlighters.

Meters start at €2 during the day (10 a.m.–5 p.m.) and are calibrated on a base hourly rate of about €24, this rate is called Tarif A. *Naturellement*, the night rate, Tarif B (5 p.m.–10 a.m. and all day Sunday), costs about €27 per hour. And Tarif C kicks in when you cross the *périphérique* (Paris's beltway) and venture into the near suburbs as well as from midnight Saturday until 7 a.m. Sunday morning in Paris. The *périphérique* itself, however, is still considered part of Paris, so don't let your driver click the meter onto Tarif C too soon (an old trick).

A taxi with a white "TAXI" light on is available; darkened, and there's a passenger on board or the driver's en route to one. You'll also notice on the dome of all taxis three small colored lights, marked A, B, and C. When lit these indicate that there is a fare en route and the tariff is being applied. When taxis are off duty, drivers strap a funky black-leather corset over the lights. Note that you'll never convince a Paris taxi driver to take you when he's off duty, and if his shift is almost over and you're not going his way, there is a good chance he'll turn you away. *Très parisien ça!*

If you climb in at an airport, expect a supplement. Any luggage, bikes, skis, and packages that are either oversized or weigh more than 5 kilos (12 pounds) also cost €0.90 after the first item. All charges and supplements are clearly noted on the inside passenger window in French and English for easy verification. Note: Since the taxi driver's strike in 2000, the minimum fare (even to go one block) is €5.20.

In general, you may not climb into a taxi with a dog (other than a guide dog), but don't be alarmed to find a bored-looking schnauzer curled up on the passenger's seat next to the driver.

Some of the larger taxi fleets accept Visa and MasterCard; almost none accept checks, and forget about using U.S. cash anywhere in Paris. As for tipping, taxi drivers don't view this as an obligation, so the rule is to add on what you feel like. Two or three euros to or from either airport is fine, and a few coins following a short Paris jaunt is perfectly acceptable. Don't overdo it. Note, though, that the *fisc* (French tax authorities) automatically adds on 7% more than a driver's declared meter receipts. So a 7% tip simply covers costs. A 10% tip is always adequate and appreciated.

**unofficial TIP**  
If the meter reads an exaggerated sum when your taxi arrives, you are completely within your rights to refuse the taxi altogether and not pay.

The real pleasure of Paris taxis, though, is the wide range of opinions, pop philosophy, and local commentary on French politics and Parisian life that many of Paris's animated chauffeurs provide free of charge.

## TRAIN PASSES AND RESERVATIONS

IF YOU ARE CERTAIN YOU'LL ONLY BE STAYING in or around Paris, you won't need to concern yourself with train passes or advance reservations. If you change your mind while you're in Paris, you can always buy a round-trip train ticket at some travel agencies or at a French Railways (SNCF) train station. If you are over 60 years old, you'll be eligible for reduced fares on the condition that you obtain a **Carte Senior**, which you can get for about €50 when buying your tickets in Paris. For SNCF information and reservations, call ☎ 08 92 35 35 35 (€0.35 per minute) or visit the Web site at [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com).

If you plan on using the Paris public-transportation system and making short, day excursions from Paris, you can deal with your ground transportation when you arrive. If, however, you plan to visit London, Brussels, Florence, Barcelona, Amsterdam, or other European cities on the same trip, you'll want to look into buying a Eurail train pass before you leave the United States.

The **Eurail France Railpass** (€263, first class, €229 second class) allows for any four days of Eurail France travel in one month, and you can purchase up to six extra days (respectively €34 and €30 per extra day). There are discounted versions of this and most other passes for couples, youth, and seniors, as well as a pass which combines with a rental car. The **Eurail Selectpass** (€370–€826) allows for unlimited travel on any 5, 6, 8, 10, or 15 days within a two-month period, using the rail networks of 3, 4, or 5 adjoining Eurail countries. Other passes allow travel through a total of 5 or even all 17 of the Eurail countries. You can read about all these options and order tickets at [www.raileurope.com](http://www.raileurope.com) or [www.eurail.com](http://www.eurail.com) or by calling ☎ 888 382 7245.

If you're considering a few days in the south of France, Normandy, Brittany, the Loire Valley, or the Alps, or a side trip to Brussels, Amsterdam, Barcelona, or Milan, for example, and you'd like to prearrange your travel schedule, you can consult the SNCF Web site or contact the Rail Europe Group in the United States as above.

## RENTING *a* CAR

IF YOU ARE FLYING INTO PARIS AND STAYING there, don't even think about renting a car. Even if you plan on taking side trips from Paris, you do not necessarily want or need a car. If, however, you plan on picking up a rental car in Paris and driving, for example, to the south of France or to the Alps, you might consider taking the train to your destination and arranging to pick up your car there. The SNCF

has a program with Avis for car rental pick-ups at many French train stations. If you are holding discounted train tickets, you are entitled to discounts at Avis, too. For details, visit the SNCF at [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com) or Avis at [www.avis.com](http://www.avis.com), or call Avis in France at ☎ 011 33 8 20 05 05 05 or in the United States at ☎ 800-230-4898. If you want your car in Paris, consult a city map and arrange for your pick-up at a location closest to your hotel. If you're staying in central Paris and you plan on driving south, avoid picking up a car at Roissy–Charles de Gaulle Airport, which is 30 miles to the north. The French car maker Renault has a “Eurodrive” rental or purchase program with pick-ups and drop-offs all over Europe. In the United States call ☎ 800-221-1052 for details and prices, or check out [www.renault.usa.com](http://www.renault.usa.com).

If you do rent a car, make sure you reserve it before leaving home. North American rates are substantially lower than those offered in France for the exact same vehicle. To get an idea of prices and special offers, start with the international rental companies. Ask for a discount and see what they offer. Don't forget to pick up frequent-flyer miles, too. Then try some of the smaller or more economical companies such as Ada and AutoEurope. The Maison de la France Travel booklet lists scores of fly-and-drive services too as does their Web site, [www.franceguide.com](http://www.franceguide.com).

**unofficial TIP**  
If you're already in Paris and decide that you want to rent a car for a few days, it's better to make an international call back to the car rental company in the United States to reserve your car for a Paris pick-up—usually at one of the train stations (not the airports). You will benefit from the U.S. rates. There's no need to mention that you're already in Paris. You can access 800 numbers from France, but they will not be toll free. Replace 800 with 880.

## RENTAL CAR CONTACT INFORMATION IN THE UNITED STATES

**Alamo** ☎ 800-462-5266 [www.alamo.com](http://www.alamo.com)  
**Avis** ☎ 800-331-1084 [www.avis.com](http://www.avis.com)  
**AutoEurope** ☎ 800-223-5555 [www.autoeurope.com](http://www.autoeurope.com)  
**Budget** ☎ 800-472-3325 [www.budget.com](http://www.budget.com)  
**Dollar** ☎ 800-800-3665 [www.dollar.com](http://www.dollar.com)  
**Hertz** ☎ 800-654-3001 [www.hertz.com](http://www.hertz.com)  
**National** ☎ 800-468-3334 [www.nationalcar.com](http://www.nationalcar.com)  
**Sixt** ☎ 888-749-8227 [www.sixtusa.com](http://www.sixtusa.com)  
**Thrifty** ☎ 877-283-0898 [www.thrifty.com](http://www.thrifty.com)

Here are a few of the leading car rental companies in Paris. They all have multiple pick-up points. Call the company to inquire which location is closest to your hotel.

**ADA** ☎ 0 825 169 169  
**Avis** ☎ 0 820 050 505  
**Europcar** ☎ 0 825 358 358

**Autorent** ☎ 01 45 54 22 45  
**Budget** ☎ 0 825 00 35 64  
**Hertz** ☎ 01 41 91 95 25

Online travel sites offering car rental deals with a Paris pick-up include the following. You may find that the negotiated rates obtainable through one of these operators are less than what you are quoted directly from a car-rental company. It never hurts to give it a try. We like working with [www.france.com](http://www.france.com), but explore a bit on your own for the best deals. Another option is [www.paris-anglo.com](http://www.paris-anglo.com), which often includes links to rentals offering promotional deals.

[www.carbookers.com](http://www.carbookers.com)

[www.cheap-car-rental.com](http://www.cheap-car-rental.com)

[www.economytravel.com](http://www.economytravel.com)

[www.france.com](http://www.france.com)

[www.paris-anglo.com](http://www.paris-anglo.com)

[www.travnet.com](http://www.travnet.com)

### A TIP ABOUT PRICE QUOTES

HERE'S ONE DETAIL TO LOOK OUT FOR. YOU should be quoted prices with the sales tax included, and if you're booking from home, you'll be quoted in U.S. dollars. When you go to pay with your credit card in Paris, you may find that the French Value Added Tax (VAT) of 19.6% has been tacked on to the sum you expected to pay. Make sure that you request that the sales tax (VAT) is included on your reservation voucher.

### CHAUFFEURS TOURING

INSTEAD OF RENTING A CAR, YOU CAN RENT an English-speaking driver and guide if you're willing to pay for this lovely luxury. You can stay within Paris or make an excursion out of the city. You only pay about €190 per half-day. You avoid the driving hassles, the gasoline prices, the insurance, the parking, and the stress, and you get your own guide and chauffeur included. To make a reservation, contact:

**Baron's Limousine Service** ☎ 01 45 30 21 21;

[www.barons-limousines.com](http://www.barons-limousines.com)

**Executive Car** ☎ 01 42 65 54 20; [www.executive-car.com](http://www.executive-car.com)

**Prestige** ☎ 01 40 43 92 92; [www.prestige-limousines.fr](http://www.prestige-limousines.fr)