

Study Abroad Information: Paris, Greece, Croatia, Italy

Kevin Brown

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API Paris

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## Paris

### How to Get to Paris

#### Getting to Paris by Plane

There are three main ways to travel to Paris: by plane, by train, or by bus. In flying to Paris there are the normal choices of major airline carriers and value airlines – such as Easyjet, Ryanair, and Wizzair. When booking a flight to Paris, especially if going by value airline, it is important to know which airport your flight will be arriving and departing since there are three airports which service Paris. These three airports are Charles de Gaulle, Orly, and Beauvais. Charles de Gaulle and Orly provide the easiest and cheapest travel to the city. Each airport is connected to the city by dedicated bus routes that operate from 5am to roughly 11pm and the RER B (express train which turns into subway) which operates on normal subway hours. Charles de Gaulle is located to the north of the city and Orly is located to the south. The train and bus rides into the city take anywhere between 30-50 minutes. Sometimes travel times may be slower during peak hours or during strikes (grèves) which cause less frequent trains and buses. The rough cost of each method from these airports is roughly 8€. Taxis can be hailed from either airport and will be roughly 40-70€ depending upon time of day and destination. If possible it is recommended to take the RER B from either airport as it is a cheap, efficient method of transportation that will place you in the heart of the city already connected to the metro system. If using the Beauvais airport it is important to consider the cost. Beauvais is located far outside of Paris – an average 1 ½ hour bus drive. It is a private airport used by value airlines such as Wizzair. It is not connected to Paris by train and the only mode of transport provided to and from the airport is a bus service which costs 15€ each direction. To hail a taxi at this airport it would cost nearly 200€.

#### Getting to Paris by Train

Getting to Paris by train can be a fun experience. Most of Europe has a very extensive and fast rail system with France being no exception. Depending on where you are coming from it is possible to arrive at several train stations within Paris, Gare du Nord, Gare de l'Est, or Gare de Lyon for example, which are all connected to the metro system. Depending on the time of year, how quick you need to travel, and the experience you are looking for, traveling to Paris by train can be cheaper and a greater experience than other methods. It is possible to book night trains which would allow for saving the cost of a night's lodgings. These trains are often very fast as they operate primarily on high speed rail. A good resource for finding rail tickets for those who do not understand French is located at [http://www.tgv-europe.com/en/?rfr=Homepage\\_footer\\_United%20Kingdom](http://www.tgv-europe.com/en/?rfr=Homepage_footer_United%20Kingdom).

#### Getting to Paris by Bus

If you live fairly close to France the bus can be a very attractive option to visit for a weekend and/or save money. Eurolines is the company that provides this service and can be found at <http://www.eurolines.com>. Traveling to Paris from either London or Amsterdam takes 7-8 hours. Round trip tickets from these cities can cost anywhere from 35€-80€ - often times the cheapest method of travel. If on a tight budget it is possible to use a night bus each direction. By choosing to take the night

bus it will save you two nights cost of lodging – which can be quite high in Paris. That is the method that I used when traveling from Paris to the above mentioned cities and it was a very easy, efficient, stress-free method of travel.

## In Paris

### . Transportation within Paris

There are several ways to get around within Paris: by metro, by bus, by tramway, by taxi, by bicycle, and walking. Paris is a city of more than 10 million. However, the heart of Paris is located in zone 1. Access to zones 1 and 2 will be sufficient to see most all sites. Paris has one of the best metro systems in the entire world. Most all sites are easily accessed by metro. If visiting Paris the best, and cheapest, method is to buy all day passes. All day passes can be purchased for 1, 2, 3, or 5 days. These passes, along with individual tickets can be purchased in any metro stop. You can choose to use the window with attendant to purchase or an automatic machine. Sometimes these passes will have problems and become deactivated. To fix this problem simply go to a window at any metro stop and have an attendant replace the pass. If studying in Paris you will want to have a NaviGo pass. If your program does not provide a NaviGo pass the card can be purchased in the same method as mentioned above for 5€. These passes will also require a passport size photo. For 55€ month you can have access to all transportation methods within zones 1 and 2. When traveling by metro a good estimate on how long it will take to get from point a to point b is 2 minutes per stop. This estimate also accounts for switching lines. A good resource for mapping routes is [www.ratp.info](http://www.ratp.info). If you use the plan interactif it will plot the fastest course possible with an estimate of traveling time based on current conditions. Sometimes it is easier to take a route that doesn't appear to be as fast to avoid congestion. For example, line 1, the first metro line in Paris, has many of the most popular tourist attractions located on its stops and also services the business district where many work. Around the five o'clock hour sardines in a can would be an under expression. It is important to always have any types of bags closed and in front of you on the metro. If you are a guy I would recommend having a front pocket wallet. At certain times of the day when the metro is packed and you are trying to make changes it can be easy for someone to try to make a snag as you are exiting the metro – especially at Chatelet – the largest underground subway stop in the world. The metro closes at different times depending on the day – normally around 1 am – 2am. These times are not set. Many metro conductors will leave early if they see making one more run down the track will be later than when they think they should leave.

There is also a bus system. If just visiting Paris I would not recommend using the bus system – unless you know you are just going straight down the street. It can be very easy to get on a bus going the wrong direction or miss stops, especially since the drivers will fly by stops if they do not see anybody waiting. There is a night bus system that can be beneficial if the metro is closed. The night bus is called Noctilien. It comes every 30-45 minutes and makes stops only at the major hubs around Paris.

Taxis can also be used but are the most expensive method. Taxis in Paris charge three different rates depending upon the time of day. Taking a taxi at night after the metro has closed is the most

expensive time and can cost over 20€ just to traverse half the city. Taxi drivers can sometimes attempt to “take you for a ride”. Try to be weary if you see the meter going higher than would be expected.

#### . Where to Stay in Paris

Finding a nice, reasonably priced place to stay in Paris can be a challenge. Most hotels are very expensive and offer very few amenities. Who wants to pay a large price for a place you will only use a few hours at night? If you want to go the hotel direction a cheaper hotel chain located throughout the city is called Citadines. The most attractive option would be to use a hostel. There are several hostels of varying qualities and prices located throughout Paris. Two reliable resources that can be used to locate hostels in the city, along with prices, are [hostelworld.com](http://hostelworld.com) and [hostelbookers.com](http://hostelbookers.com). I would recommend staying in hostels located along Canal St. Martin or in Montmartre. Each area is nice and offer fairly priced hostels. Montmartre is the only hill in Paris and was home to artists such as Picasso at the beginning of the 1900's and is rich in culture and history. I can personally recommend the three ducks hostel located on metro line 8, just 3 stops below the Eiffel tower. Most any place that you stay is easily accessible by metro and will be easy to travel around the city. I would recommend to stay away from staying too close to the top arrondissements – as they can be more dangerous areas at night.

#### Eating in Paris

One of the biggest expenses in Paris is food. Many locals will not eat at most restaurants as they are focused towards tourists and charge very high prices for what you receive. If price isn't an issue it is not an issue to find a well looking restaurant. All restaurants will have their menu posted outside along with prices. Eating hours in Paris are different than in the states. Breakfast is often a cup of coffee and maybe something picked up from a boulangerie. A boulangerie is a bread store which offers several other tasty treats. Bread in Paris is some of the best bread you can find in the world and also the cheapest. Fresh bread is baked every morning and regulated in price by the government. A good half baguette will only cost around 0.70€. Boulangeries can be found all over the city. Lunch is often the biggest meal of the day and is around 3pm. When choosing a café to eat at its important to know the price that you are charged is based upon where you sit. If you sit at the bar you receive the lowest price, inside the second lowest, and outside the highest. It is not necessary to tip as it is included in the price. If you ask for water you will receive a bottle of water you will have to pay for. If you ask for a carafe de l'eau (kuh raf duh low) you will receive water that you would expect like an American restaurant. If you ask for a coffee you will receive what we consider an espresso – you must ask for a café americain to receive what is normally considered a coffee. If on a tight budget and wanting a generous portion of food, check out one of the many kebab shops. For only 5€ you receive a large amount of food. To experience the Parisian way stop in a market and buy your own items for lunch (much cheaper) and sit in a park and do some people watching. To find a large selection of all types of foods check out Rue Mouffetard in the 5<sup>th</sup> arrondissement. Dinner is normally eaten around 9pm and lasts about an hour and a half to two hours. Several restaurants offer prix fixe menus which offer three to five courses which you can choose between a set menu of options. At several restaurants you can get a cheaper prix fixe menu if you arrive before 8pm. You can find several well priced restaurants of this sort in the 1<sup>st</sup> arrondissement in the Chatelet area. For around 30€ you can eat at Le Relais de l'Entrecote (one of my

personal favorites). There are three locations throughout Paris which can be found at <http://www.relaisentrecote.fr/>. The only choice you have at this restaurant is how you want your steak cooked and what to drink. You receive a salad for appetizer and for an entree you receive a steak and fries. Then a magical thing happens, when you finish your steak and fries you receive a second helping. A bonus is this restaurant has a staff that is fluent in English if you do not speak French.

A key thing to remember is service differs at French restaurants. Unlike in the states waiters and waitresses will not constantly wait on you and ask you how you are doing as it is considered intrusive and rude. You will often need to get someone's attention when you need help. Also you will not receive a check when it seems that you are finished. You must ask for the check in order to receive one. This is asked by "L'addition s'il vous plait" (la-dish-e-on seal vooo play). Etiquette is also slightly different. It is considered polite to have your elbows on the table. This comes from old practices of wanting to see people hands at all times. When you eat bread, the bread stays on the table.

### Money and Banking

France uses the Euro and this is the only currency accepted in Paris. ATM machines are easily found and you are never more than a block from any ATM on any main boulevard. All major brand name ATM's that you find do not charge a surcharge. However, your individual bank may have its own individual international charges. For example, Commerce Bank charges a \$1.50 fee and 1% of all transactions (one of the cheapest charges among American banks). If you have a Bank of America account look for BNP Paribas ATM's. BNP Paribas is a sister bank of BofA and you should not be charged fees at these ATM's. However, many times they still do charge these fees. If you have BofA and are charged fees from these ATM's call a representative and they will credit your account.

If you have American dollars to exchange (not advisable) you can find exchange bureaus. Nearly all of these bureaus will charge you large fees to change your money. If you need to exchange dollars there is one bureau that I found to charge a reasonable rate. To find this bureau get off at metro stop Opera (lines 3,7, and 8). You will want to walk west on Boulevard des Capucines. To know that you are going the right direction you want to be facing the large opera house (Palais Garnier) and look for the building that says commerzbank on the side. Boulevard des Capucines will be just in front of this building and you will want to be on the right side of the road. The exchange shop is on the right side about a two to three minute walk. You will see an exchange ticker for many currencies in the window.

If you are studying in Paris it is possible to set up a French bank account. If you are studying with a program such as API they can aid you in this process as it can be a very difficult one without the proper help. There are several benefits to having a French bank account. After receiving the French debit card with smart chip it becomes possible to use the Velib's (Bikes around town). If you have 150€ in your account at all times it becomes free to use the bikes up to 30 minutes. It is a good option if you happen to miss the metro when cabs are very expensive.

## Vendors around Tourist Attractions

At any major tourist site you are going to have several people trying to sell things to you. Many of which are tricks and scams. For example, on the steps up to the Sacre Coeur there are several African immigrants who will start chatting to you friendly while trying to tie a bracelet on your wrist, a “friendship bracelet”. If they are successful in doing this they will demand 10€ from you. They will then keep hassling you until you give them some money to leave them alone. The easiest way to deal with these issues at the tourist destinations is to ignore these people. Do not make eye contact and do not smile at them. While you may feel like you are being extremely rude it is the easiest method and saves a lot of time.

## Layout of Paris

### Districts of Paris

There are 20 districts in Paris called arrondissements. It is a good idea to have an idea of how Paris is broken up and what is in each district. When asking for directions or looking at maps you will often be told it is in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup>, etc. This is referring to the district. The following picture is a good representation of the districts.



If you look at the map and start with the 1<sup>st</sup> arrondissement you can see that it follows a snail pattern. It is good to know what main attractions are in what districts as it will help you save travel time instead of crossing back and forth all over the city. For example, many of the city’s main museums are in the 1<sup>st</sup>, the Eiffel tower is in the 7<sup>th</sup>, and the Moulin Rouge is in the 18<sup>th</sup>. The following list gives a good idea of main attractions by arrondissement. A word of advice, stay away from the northern borders of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> at night.

- 1st (1<sup>er</sup>). The Musée du Louvre, the Jardin des Tuileries, Place Vendôme, Les Halles, Palais Royal, Comédie-Française
- 2nd (2<sup>e</sup>). The central business district of the city - the Bourse (the Paris Stock Exchange), Opéra-Comique, Théâtre des Variétés.
- 3rd (3<sup>e</sup>). Musée Carnavalet, Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers, Hôtel de Soubise, the Former Temple fortress, and the northern section of le Marais.
- 4th (4<sup>e</sup>). Notre-Dame de Paris, the Hôtel de Ville (Paris city hall), Hôtel de Sully, Rue des Rosiers and the Jewish Quartier, Beaubourg, Le Marais, Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville, Mémorial de la Shoah, Centre Georges Pompidou, Place des Vosges, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Saint-Jacques Tower and Île Saint-Louis.
- 5th (5<sup>e</sup>). Jardin des Plantes, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Musée de Cluny, The Panthéon, Quartier Latin, La Sorbonne, La Grande Mosquée, Le Musée de l'AP-HP.
- 6th (6<sup>e</sup>). Jardin du Luxembourg and le Sénat, Place Saint-Michel, Église Saint-Sulpice and Saint-Germain des Prés.
- 7th (7<sup>e</sup>). Tour Eiffel and Parc du Champ de Mars, Les Invalides, Musée d'Orsay, Assemblée Nationale, Ecole Militaire.
- 8th (8<sup>e</sup>). Champs-Élysées, Arc de Triomphe, Place de la Concorde, le Palais de l'Élysée, Église de la Madeleine, Jacquemart-André Museum, Grand Palais and Petit Palais.
- 9th (9<sup>e</sup>). Opéra Garnier, Galeries Lafayette, Musée Grévin.
- 10th (10<sup>e</sup>). Canal Saint-Martin, Gare du Nord, Gare de l'Est.
- 11th (11<sup>e</sup>). The bars and restaurants of Rue Oberkampf, Bastille, Nation, Cirque d'Hiver.
- 12th (12<sup>e</sup>). Opéra Bastille, Bercy Park and Village, Promenade Plantée, Quartier d'Aligre, Gare de Lyon, Cimetière de Picpus, Viaduc des arts the Bois de Vincennes, and the Zoo de Vincennes.
- 13th (13<sup>e</sup>). Quartier la Petite Asie, Place d'Italie, La Butte aux Cailles, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF), Gare d'Austerlitz.
- 14th (14<sup>e</sup>). Cimetière du Montparnasse, Gare Montparnasse, La Santé Prison, Denfert-Rochereau, Parc Montsouris, Stade Charléty, Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris, and the Catacombs.
- 15th (15<sup>e</sup>). Tour Montparnasse.
- 16th (16<sup>e</sup>). Palais de Chaillot, Musée de l'Homme, the Bois de Boulogne, Cimetière de Passy, Parc des Princes, Musée Marmottan-Monet, Trocadéro, and Avenue Foch can be found here.

- 17th (17<sup>e</sup>). Palais des Congrès, Place de Clichy, Parc Monceau, Marché Poncelet, and Square des Batignolles can be found here.
- 18th (18<sup>e</sup>). Montmartre, Pigalle, Barbès, Basilica of the Sacré Cœur, Église Saint-Jean-de-Montmartre, and Goutte d'Or can be found here.
- 19th (19<sup>e</sup>). Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, Parc de la Villette, Bassin de la Villette, Parc des Buttes Chaumont, Cité de la Musique, Canal de l'Ourcq, and Canal Saint-Denis can be found here.
- 20th (20<sup>e</sup>). Cimetière de Père Lachaise, Parc de Belleville, and quartiers Belleville and Ménilmontant can be found here.
- La Défense. Although it is not officially part of the city, this skyscraper district on the western edge of town is on many visitors' must-see lists for its modern architecture and public art.

## Maps of Paris

You will undoubtedly need maps to help you getting around Paris. Several hotels and hostels will have basic fold out maps which will give you a good layout of the city and show key attractions in large pictures on the map. These maps will suffice for getting around. The best option is the Paris Pratique. This is a small book which can be bought for 5€ at nearly any stand selling newspapers and any bookstore. This is the book that even Parisians have in their bag. This book has a breakdown of each arrondissement with every road and the direction that traffic is going. If you plan on exploring on foot this small book is indispensable.

It's also good to have a map of the metro system. You can get these maps at most metro stops at the window before you go through a turnstall. If you have a smartphone or an iPod touch I would recommend downloading RATP lite. It is a free application from the French train system which comes with a map of the bus lines, night bus, and the metro. I found this to be very handy on my iPod when I needed to find alternate routes or travel to a new area. You don't have to deal with a large paper map and you don't stand out.

## Useful Paris Information

### Dress in Paris

Paris is considered the fashion capital of the world. However, you will not see people wearing crazy outfits. Most in Paris dress rather conservatively. Most wear neutral colors such as black and grays. It does seem though that everyone is always dressed up, which is true. You will never see someone wearing sweatpants or shorts. It is common to see girls wearing 3-4 inch heels at 10 am as a normal shoe. A staple of dress in Paris is the scarf. As long as it isn't summer it is recommended that you wear a scarf. The more you blend in the less potential problems you will encounter. If you wear bright colors you can expect to have the pleasure of being constantly stared at.

## Protests

There are protests in Paris nearly every week. Many of these protests will take place in the northern areas of Paris on the grand boulevards. More than often they take place around the Palais Garnier opera house or head towards the Arc de Triomphe. While it may be interesting to see what is going on in this protest or even be a part of it this is not advisable. Many of these protests are by immigrant groups wanting more rights or higher pay. While the large majority of the protestors are peaceful there are always a few who join who do not have peaceful intentions. It is possible that fights can break out which is not a good situation; there are often police in full riot gear at large protests to ensure peaceful protest. If you run into a large protest it is best to find an alternative route around the demonstration or go to a different area of town if the site you want to visit is blocked. It will often clear out after a few hours.

## Studying in Paris – Carte CROUS

If you are studying in Paris the most expensive thing will be the cost of food. If you are on the go a lot the cost of eating in cafes or at restaurants can quickly add up. It is very easy to spend close to \$600 a month on food. One way to help against the costs of food is to get a CROUS card. If you do not receive one from your academic program, or if you chose to directly enroll, you can receive one from this link [http://www.crous-lille.fr/carte\\_crous\\_etudiant.php](http://www.crous-lille.fr/carte_crous_etudiant.php). With this card you can eat at several types of university cafeterias and restaurants around the city. It makes lunch and dinners very affordable at 2€ to 4€ a meal. To buy recharges for the card you can buy them at any Tabac shop that sells Moneo. I would recommend using the restaurant at Port-Royal RER B stop. It is the building to the left when leaving the station. It offers the best selection of food and best hours of operation with a fairly central location.

## Music in Paris

If you like live music most live venues can be found in the 20<sup>th</sup>. Indie acts from all over the world come to a venue called La Fleche d'or, [www.flechedor.fr](http://www.flechedor.fr). When there is a full lineup of 3-4 acts the charge at the door is often only 5€-10€ and well worth the cover charge. It is a very good atmosphere and a good place to hear and see some live music. If you want to see what acts are coming and where you can pick up the LYLO (Les Yeux Les Oreilles) for free at clubs and music stores. If you are a fan of house music top DJ's from all over the world make surprise and guest visits to many clubs around Paris.

## Useful Phrases

Thank you.

Merci.

Thank you very much.

Merci beaucoup.

You're welcome.

De rien.

Please.

S'il vous plaît.

Yes.

Oui.

No.

Non.  
Excuse me.  
Excusez-moi.  
Pardon me.  
Pardon.  
Sorry!  
Excusez-moi!  
I don't understand.  
Je ne comprends pas.  
I don't speak French.  
Je ne parle pas français.  
I don't speak French very well.  
Je ne parle pas très bien français.  
Do you speak English?  
Parlez-vous anglais?  
Could you speak more slowly, please?  
Pourriez-vous parler plus lentement, s'il vous plaît?  
Could you repeat (that), please?  
Pourriez-vous répéter, s'il vous plaît?  
What's your name?  
Comment vous appelez-vous?  
How are you?  
Comment allez-vous?  
Do you speak English?  
Parlez-vous anglais?  
Where is the subway?  
Où est le métro?  
Is the tip included?  
Est-ce que le service est compris?  
How much does that cost?  
Combien ça coûte?  
Is there a public phone here?  
Y a-t-il un téléphone public ici?  
Can I get on the internet?  
Puis-je me connecter à l'Internet?  
Can you help me, please?  
Pouvez-vous m'aider, s'il vous plaît?  
Where is the bathroom?  
Où sont les toilettes?  
I like my steak rare.  
J'aime mon steak saignant.  
I like my steak medium.  
J'aime mon steak à point.  
I like my steak well-done.  
J'aime mon steak bien cuit.  
Where?

Où?  
Excuse me, where is...?  
Excusez-moi, où est...?  
Where are the taxis?  
Où sont les taxis?  
Where is the bus?  
Où est le bus?  
Where is the subway?  
Où est le métro?  
Where is the exit?  
Où est la sortie?  
Is it nearby?  
C'est près d'ici?  
Is it far?  
C'est loin?  
Go straight ahead.  
Allez tout droit.  
Go that way.  
Allez par là.  
Go back.  
Retournez.  
Turn right.  
Tournez à droite.  
Turn left.  
Tournez à gauche.  
Take me to this address, please.  
Emmenez-moi à cette adresse, s'il vous plaît.  
What is the fare?  
Quel est le prix de la course?  
Stop here, please.  
Arrêtez-vous ici, s'il vous plaît.  
Does this bus go to Descartes Street?  
Est-ce que ce bus passe par la rue Descartes?  
Can I have a map of the city, please?  
Puis-je avoir un plan de la ville, s'il vous plaît?  
Can I have a subway map, please?  
Puis-je avoir un plan du métro, s'il vous plaît?

If you do not speak French at least make an effort to when asking someone for help. If you are making an effort to speak their language more often than not they will make an effort to help you if they are not in too much of a hurry. If you do not make an effort to speak French this is when you will more than likely receive what is considered a rude French response. The French are very proud of their language and not everyone knows English. Making at least a small attempt to speak French will help you tremendously. How to get the French accent right? Pretend like you're making fun of them, it works.

## Visiting Paris – Have a Plan

If you are just visiting Paris one of the most important things you can do is have a plan of attack before you arrive. Paris is home to literally hundreds of museums and many attractions that you could spend entire days in. For example, at the Louvre if you spent just one minute looking at each piece of art you would spend five straight weeks in the museum. Know how many days you will be staying in Paris and write down a rough idea of the places you want to see. Get an idea of what is close to one another and try to see sights in bunches. Build a timeframe for how much time you can spend at each attraction and try to stick to it. Make sure to factor in travel time and getting lost time. Getting lost is inevitable. You will miss a metro connection, go the wrong direction, or get lost on the streets. Don't worry, this is one of the fun things and can lead you to discovering something about Paris you did not know about. Many of the most popular attractions will have long lines before noon and throughout the afternoon. If you want to avoid long lines visit the most popular sights on your list in the morning. To give a rough idea of visiting sights after studying in Paris for 3 months I was the personal tour guide for some friends for 3 days. Knowing the in and outs of the sights and how to best get around the metro system these 3 days were barely enough to show and visit many of the main attractions. Don't try to cram too much into too short of time. You will feel rushed and the visit won't be as gratifying.

### Attractions and Activities

#### Attractions and Activities

There are enough things to see and do in Paris that you could do something new every single day of the year and still have things you never imagined existed at the end of the year. Paris can be a very expensive city or a very cheap city – it is what you make it. There are plenty of attractions and sights that can be seen for free: churches, historical landmarks, etc. On the first Sunday of every month all national museums have free entry. If you are under 26 and have a Visa in your passport for an EU country, just give the ticket window at the attraction your passport with the visa sticker showing. All national museums and attractions, such as the Louvre and Arc de Triomphe, are free in France for those under 26 and citizens of the EU – which the visa takes care of if you have a French visa. Keep in mind though that there are certain places that you will still need to pay, such as the Catacombs. If you do not have a visa to France country a good option is to buy the Paris Museum Pass – you can try to talk your way in with a visa from another country which most of the time will work. The pass is good for either 2, 4, or 6 consecutive days at a cost of 32€, 48€, and 64€ respectively. The pass provides access to, with line skipping, over 60 museums. If you plan to visit more than 6 or 7 museums or landmarks this pass pays for itself. The pass can be purchased online, at museums in Paris, FNAC stores, and other options. Visit <http://en.parismuseumpass.com/rub-the-pass-presentation-and-advantages-2.htm> for more information on the museum pass.

## Le Marais

Le Marais, which means the marsh in English, is located in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> and is where Paris started. Soon after Paris was founded this where French aristocracy began to build their mansions. One of the fun parts is to walk around this area and have a look at the buildings which are what one thinks of when thinking of Paris. When Paris was completely redesigned by Hausmann at the request of Napoleon III in the 1840's this is one of the few areas that did not have buildings demolished for the new city plan. You can see remnants of the original city wall here and the few medieval buildings that are still left in the city. Today the area has a large Jewish presence. When most shops are closed on Sundays, as France is largely catholic, this is a good area to visit to get some good food. The area has become very popular today and is beginning to become home to fashion designers as they branch off from popular fashion brands such as Yves Saint Laurent. The area is a fairly decent size and you can use several metro stops in the area: St-Paul or Hotel de Ville line 1, Rambuteau line 11, Art et Metiers or Republic line 3.

## Montmartre

Montmartre is a large, and the only, hill in Paris. The area is home to several attractions and has a rich cultural history. Some of the sights that can be found in Montmartre are the Sacre Coeur, Moulin Rouge, lapin agile, and former home to le chat noir. The area was home to many of the most influential artists and writers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Artists such as Renoir, Van Gogh, and Picasso frequented or lived in the area. To go on a walking tour of the area go to metro stop Abbesses on line 12. This metro stop is the deepest metro stop in Paris. When leaving the stop find the elevator and take it to the top. I did not know that this was the deepest metro stop on my first visit and I took the stairs. I ended up in a never ending run up a set of spiral stairs that I thought would never end. This metro stop is the only one that still has its original art nouveau decoration by Guimard. This district is best seen by walking so make sure you have some comfortable shoes for the trek up the hill. Upon leaving the metro stop go right across the square and take the first hill up. When you reach the top of this hill you will arrive at a semi-tiered square. On the left you will see a building which has a presentation behind glass. This building was the home to painters such as Picasso and Pissaro when they started their careers. Continue going up the hill and take your first left. Here you will find the Moulin de la Galette. Continue going up the hill and with your map find Rue Saint-Vincent. On this street you will see a small vineyard. This small vineyard has been producing wine for hundreds of years and still produces 500 liters today. Next to this you will see the lapin agile. This famous cabaret often hosted Picasso during his time in Paris and several other prolific writers and artists. Picasso once paid for a meal with a painting, a painting that was sold in auction in the 80's for \$41 million. After visiting the lapin agile keep heading up the hill where you will eventually peak at the Sacre Coeur. Go inside and check out the church. When coming out the front of the church go to the rail for one of the best views of Paris. When leaving go down the front stairs. Be wary of the many tourist traps and pay no attention to them. At the bottom of the hill continue straight and you will eventually run into a metro stop.

## Parks and "Gardens"

While being a large city Paris is also known for its many parks and gardens. Many Parisians can be found in parks eating their lunches or enjoying a break in their day. Several of the parks used to be only accessible to royal families and aristocracy. Some, such as the Tuileries, was home to a former grand palace and the site of much turmoil which shaped the history of France and the modern world as we know it today. Parks and Gardens are a good place to take a break in Paris, enjoy a meal, and take it all in. You must stay off the grass though, except in a few parks, and there are police that will make sure you do this. The following is a list of a majority of the parks in Paris, their location, and a brief description.

### **Le Bois de Boulogne (Paris 16e)**

The city's most legendary and largest park, known to Parisians as "Le Bois", was landscaped into an upper-class playground by Baron Haussmann in the 1850s, using London's Hyde Park as his model. Formerly a royal forest and hunting ground, this vast 2200-acre reserve is crisscrossed by broad, leafy roads, home to rowers, joggers, strollers, bicyclists, games of *pétanque* (or boules), picknickers, and lovers. Main entrance at bottom of avenue Foch. Métro: Porte Maillot, Porte Dauphine, or Porte d'Auteuil. Bus: 244. Phone: 01-40-67-97-02.

### **Le Bois de Vincennes (Paris 12e)**

This sprawling park on the eastern periphery of Paris has been a longtime favorite of French families, who enjoy its zoos, museums, royal château, four lakes (Lacs Daumesnil, Minimes, Gravelle, Saint Mandé), boating, and an annual carnival, the "Foire du Trone". A celebrated flower garden here, the Parc Floral de Paris, is host to the "Foire à la Feraille de Paris" -- an annual antique and secondhand fair. Métro: Porte de Charenton, Porte Dorée, or Liberté. Bus: 87.

### **Jardin Atlantique (Paris 19e)**

Opened in 1994, this small park was planted on a concourse constructed over the first 100 yards of railroad tracks leading to the Gare Montparnasse. It features an assortment of trees and plants from countries on the Atlantic Ocean. Location: Pont des Cinq-Martyrs-du-Lycée- Buffon. Métro: Gaité.

### **Jardin du Bassin de l'Arsenal (Paris 12e)**

Excavated in 1806 during the Napoleonic period, the Arsenal basin connects the Canal Saint-Martin to the Seine via a series of nine locks. Its garden is harmoniously landscaped with many plants. In the midst of a small alcove of greenery, stands Henri Arnold's 1983 sculpture depicting a graceful, young woman. Métro: Bastille.

### **Jardin des Champs-Élysées (Paris 8e)**

Located between the Rond-point des Champs-Élysées and the Place de la Concorde, a restored and embellished garden was inaugurated in September 1994. Showcasing the skill of 19th century architects and horticulturalists, it is criss-crossed by countless paths flanked by majestic trees. Rolling lawns planted with shrubs and flower beds also adorn the garden. Métro: Champs-Élysées Clémenceau.

### **Jardin des Halles (Paris 1er)**

During the Second Empire, les Halles (formerly Paris' outdoor market) was comprised of ten glass-roofed, structured pavilions which were subsequently dismantled and moved to the Paris suburbs. Today, the former market has given way to climbing plants, honeysuckle, jasmin, kiwi vines, wisteria, clematis and, countless other plants. Children will be delighted by a tropical rainforest, a waterfall, a forbidden city and many other attractions. Location: Forum des Halles, 105, rue Rambuteau, 75001 Paris. Métro: Les Halles.

### **Jardin du Palais Royal (Paris 1er)**

Surrounded by three elegant, covered arcades, this quiet garden was the most popular place to stroll during the Revolution, and was the stage for major historical events. Lovers of contemporary sculpture will appreciate Pol Bury's steel-ball sculptures which decorate the fountains, and Daniel Buren's controversial, prison-striped columns built in 1986. Métro: Palais Royal

### **Jardin des Plantes - Botanical Gardens (Paris 5e)**

This enormous swath of greenery contains the botanical garden, the Grande Galerie de l'Evolution, and three natural history museums. There is also an alpine garden, an aquarium, a maze, a number of hothouses, and a small, old-fashioned zoo. Entrances on rue Geoffroy-St-Hilaire and rue Buffon. Admission: Zoo 30FF; Mineralogy Museum 30FF; Paleontology Museum 20FF; Entomology Museum 15FF. Hours: Garden daily 7:30am-sunset; zoo daily 9am-6pm; museums Wed.-Mon. 10am-5pm. Métro: Censier-Daubenton, Monge, or Gare d'Austerlitz. Phone: 01-40-79-30-00.

### **Jardin des Tuileries (Paris 1er)**

Among the most popular open spaces in the city, ideal for a picnic or leisurely stroll, these neo-classical gardens once belonged to the Palais des Tuileries, which was burned down by the Communards in 1871. They were laid out in the 17th century by André Le Nôtre, who created the broad central avenue and topiary arranged in geometric designs.

Location: quai des Tuileries. Métro: Tuileries. Phone: 01-42-96-19-33.

### **Jardin et Palais du Luxembourg (Paris 6e)**

Located not far from the Sorbonne, just south of the Latin Quarter, the Jardin du Luxembourg is one of Paris' most beloved parks, offering a myriad of fountains, statues of queens and poets, as well as tennis courts and spaces for playing *boules*. Children enjoy its *parc à jeux* (playground) and the *théâtre des marionnettes* (puppet theater).

Location: rue de Vaugirard. Métro: Odéon, Saint-Placide. RER: Luxembourg. Buses: 42, 69, 72, 82, 87. Phone: 01-43-29-12-78.

### **Major parks and gardens**

The Paris Convention & Visitors Bureau offers descriptions of 28 major parks and gardens in and near the city, picturesque river banks, quays and canals, memorable fountains, remarkable trees (the oldest one was planted in 1601!), and zoos.

### **Parc André Citroën (Paris 15e)**

Located between the Seine and the new districts built on the former site of Citroën's automobile plant, this futurist park covers 14 hectares and offers visitors a succession of beautiful and varied botanical gardens, a perfect spot for a bit of rest and reverie. Water plays an integral role in the park with its fountains and waterfalls, sculptures amid the pools, and canal.

Métro: Balard.

### **Parc de Bagatelle (Paris 16e)**

Thematic gardens reveal the art of gardening through the centuries, and the rose gardens in particular are sublime. Used as a hunting lodge by Napoleon, the château here was built in 66 days by the Comte d'Artois following a wager with his sister-in-law, Marie Antoinette.

Métro: Porte Maillot.

### **Parc de Belleville (Paris 20e)**

In this Right Bank district teeming with cultural diversity, you'll find turbaned men selling dates, numerous Chinese, Vietnamese, and Thai restaurants, as well as a Sephardic Jewish community transplanted from Algeria and Tunisia. Overlooking it all is the new Parc de Belleville, 11 acres of gardens and paths on a hill with a spectacular view of Paris. This was Edith Piaf's former neighborhood, and she is buried -- along with numerous other cultural icons -- in the nearby Père-Lachaise Cemetery.

Métro:

### **Parc de Bercy (Paris 12e)**

Comprised primarily of vast lawns, a romantic garden, a vegetable garden, an orchard, and a scented-flower garden, the park is located on the site of the old Bercy warehouses. To the south, it is extended by a wide terrace leading toward the Seine, and is next to the Palais Omnisports de Paris Bercy.

Métro: Bercy .

### **Parc de la Terluire (Paris 18e)**

The residents of Montmartre surely aren't gawking at mimes or having their portraits sketched on the place du Tertre. Where do they go to escape the carnival? On a sunny day they might be found at the parc de la Terluire, a tranquil hideaway on rue de la Bonne, north of Sacré-Coeur.

Métro: Château Rouge.

### **Parc de la Villette (Paris 19e)**

Until the 1970s this 130-acre site, in an unfashionable corner of northeast Paris, was home to a cattle market and *abattoir* (slaughterhouse). The site was transformed into an ambitiously landscaped, futuristic park with sweeping lawns, a children's playground, canopied walkways, a cinema, two museums, brightly painted pavilions, and a state-of-the-art concert hall -- the Cité de la Musique.

Métro: Porte de la Villette, Porte de Pantin.

### **Parc des Buttes-Chaumont (Paris 19e)**

During the 1860s, Baron Haussmann converted this hilly site from a garbage dump and quarry -- with gallows at its foot -- into beautiful English-style gardens, replete with a lake and man-made island, a Roman-style temple, waterfall, streams, and footbridges. Today, in summer, visitors will also find boating facilities, donkey rides, and sun worshipers on the beautifully kept lawns.

Location: rue Manin, rue de Crimée. Hours: 8am-6pm daily. Métro: Botzaris, Buttes-Chaumont. Phone: 01-40-36-41-32 or 01-42-40-88-66.

### **Parc des Expositions de Paris (Paris 15e)**

During late April to early May, a sprawling fair -- the Foire de Paris -- is held here, with hundreds of stands selling food and wine, often at excellent prices, as well as a variety of clothing and household goods; very popular with Parisians. Also the site of the Salon de l'Agriculture, an annual fair held the last week of February to the first week of March.

Métro: Porte de Versailles

### **Parc du Champs-de-Mars (Paris 7e)**

The vast green esplanade beneath the Eiffel Tower is the Parc du Champs-de-Mars, extending all the way to the 18th-century Ecole Militaire (Military Academy), at its southeast end. This formal lawn was once a parade ground for French troops.

Métro: Trocadéro, Bir-Hakeim, or Ecole Militaire. RER: Champs-de-Mars.

### **Parc Monceau (Paris 8e)**

A favorite haunt where Marcel Proust used to stroll, the Parc Monceau was commissioned in 1778 by Louis Philippe Joseph, duc de Chartres et Orléans, who was guillotined after the Revolution. After the painter Carmontelle designed several whimsical accoutrements for the park -- including a Dutch windmill, a Roman temple, a farm, medieval ruins, and a pagoda -- the place became known as "Chartres' folly." Garnerin, the world's first parachutist, landed here.

Location: boulevard de Courcelles. Métro: Monceau. Phone: 01-42-27-39-56 or 01-42-27-08-64.

### **Parc Georges Brassens (Paris 15e)**

On the site of the former Vaugirard *abbatoirs* (slaughterhouses), the horse market hallway and the two bull statues have been retained at the original entrance. Planted with many fragrant shrubs and plants. You can also discover terraced vines and a scented garden.  
Métro: Convention.

### **Parc Montsouris (Paris 14e)**

This English-style park, the second largest in Paris, was laid out by landscape architect Adolphe Alphand between 1865 and 1878. A favorite place for students and young children, it offers a restaurant, lawns, and a lake inhabited by many different species of birds.  
Location: boulevard Jourdan. Hours: 7:30am-7pm daily. Métro: Porte d'Orléans. RER: Cité Universitaire. Phone: 01-45-88-28-60.

### **Place des Vosges / Square Louis XIII (Paris 4e)**

Located in the historical Marais neighborhood, place des Vosges is planted with linden trees and lawns which are criss-crossed by symmetrical paths. The Ginard fountain, whose waters were drawn from the canal de l'Ourq, was inaugurated in 1811. In 1829, it was replaced by a marble, equestrian statue of Louis XIII. In 1835, the four Ménager fountains were installed.  
Métro: Chemin Vert, Saint-Paul.

### **Square des Arènes de Lutèce (Paris 5e)**

Made out of cut stone, the Lutetia Arena was built in the late first century AD, during the Gallo-Roman period, for circus and theatrical presentations. It is surrounded by a thicket of greenery. Shows and plays are staged in this garden during the summer.  
Location: rue de Navarre, 75005 Paris. Métro: Jussieu.

### **Square du Vert-Galant (Paris 1er)**

The Ile-de-la-Cité is shaped very much like a ship (hence the symbol for Paris is a boat), and at its "bow" -- the western tip -- is the Square du Vert-Galant (Henri IV's nickname), next to the Pont Neuf. It is planted with a wide variety of trees and flowers.  
Métro: Pont-Neuf

## 21. Jardin du Luxembourg

The Jardin du Luxembourg is probably one of the most popular public spaces among Parisians. It is a good area to go and take a break from your day, relax, and do some people watching. The Garden and the building within, the Palais du Luxembourg, was constructed by Marie de Medici in the 1500's. The building is a fine example of French architecture and today serves as part of the French senate. In the garden you can find the Medici fountain. Also along one of the axes you can find the original model for the statue of liberty in small scale. In front of the Senate building there is a large reflecting pool where you can relax with some ice cream purchased at the gate and watch children race sailboats. Opposite the Senate you will find the manicured gardens turn into an English style with wandering paths. There are over 100 statues here of famous figures. To find the Luxembourg gardens the easiest stop is the RER B – Luxembourg. Entry into the garden is free but the senate is off limits.

## 22. Jardin des Tuileries

The Jardin des Tuileries is located between two important sites in Paris, the Louvre and the Place de la Concorde. While a good place to have a rest it is also an important historical site. The Tuileries was the first royal garden to become open for the public. The plan for the garden in its current state closely follows the plan by the same designer of the gardens at Versailles. Originally, there was a Palais des Tuileries at the site. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were kept prisoner here during the French Revolution. Hundreds were killed at the site when "the mob" decided it was time for Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette to meet the guillotine. Today in the Tuileries you can find many important statues from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and several modern pieces. At the west end of the Tuileries you will find the Orangerie which houses Monet's famous water lilies series of painting. The Tuileries has been the subject of several famous painters such as Manet and Pissaro. Access to the garden is free and can be reached from the Louvre courtyard or at the Tuileries metro stop on line 1. From the Tuileries, with the

lack of the original building, you have a straight view all the way from the Louvre, going up the Champs Elysees, past the Arc de Triomphe out of the city to La Defense.

### Jardin des Plantes

The Jardin des Plantes is home to many of the natural history museums that can be found in Paris and a botany school. The garden has the most diversity of any of the gardens in Paris. In front of the main building you will find a traditional style French garden. It is a good place to relax and people watch. Here you can find people jogging around the large rectangular path. It is interesting to watch since jogging is not popular in Paris and people do not realize the proper equipment needed to go running – i.e. running shoes. Walking through the many areas of the garden is free however there is a fee for the museums. The Jardin des Plantes can be accessed from Gare d’Austerlitz, lines 5, 10, or the RER C or from Jussieu line 7 or 10.

### Montsouris

Mountsouris is a park in the south of Paris. It is an English style park with a large manmade lake with an island in the middle. This park has a large amount of open green space which is good because it is one of the only parks or gardens in Paris where you are allowed to go onto the grass. Across from the park you can find many international student dorm building – one of which is mainly for American students. To get to this park you want Cite Universitaire on the RER B or Montsouris on tram way 3. It is highly likely that you will run into American students at the Cite Universitaire stop.

### Buttes Chaumont

Buttes Chaumont is my favorite park in all of Paris and is also where you will find many Parisians going to get away from life in the city. This park was manmade in the 1800’s and you will not believe that you are actually in a city of 10 million people. There is a manmade 105 foot cliff with a waterfall into a manmade lake. At the top of the cliff there is a temple in Roman style that can be accessed by a “suicide” bridge 95 feet above the ground. This is also one of the only parks and gardens where you are allowed to go on the grass. This area is not very well known by tourists and is a great place to get away. I would highly recommend taking a visit to this park if you can only pick one. The metro stop is Buttes Chaumont on line 7bis. The following pictures are from the park. Hard to believe this is in the middle of such a city?



## Museums

### The Louvre

This is the museums of museums. You could spend days here and still have no idea of all the treasures hidden inside. At this museum you can obtain a true appreciation for all the cultures of the world from pre-historic to the 1800's. Originally starting as a castle in the 1100's the Louvre arrived at its present form in 2002. The Louvre became a museum during the French Revolution opening on 10 August 1793. The most important thing in going to the Louvre is know what you want to see. By having an idea of the key pieces you can map out a plan of attack. The Louvre has over 660,000 square feet of exhibition space making it very easy to get side tracked. There are several wings, two main wings, which stretch out for what seem like miles. If you are on a tight schedule it is very easy to accidentally spend several extra hours here. I visited the Louvre at least on 20 separate occasions and still didn't see everything I wanted to. When entering the Louvre take advantage of the free coat check. If you are under 26 and have a European visa go to a ticket window and show your passport with visa to get a free ticket. If you do not have this, go to an automatic machine to buy your ticket. Cost of entry is 9.50€ or 6.50€ on wed. and Friday evenings from 6pm – 9:45pm. It is also free on the first Sunday of every month. Also make sure to grab a free map in the middle area under the pyramid as they are free. You can access the Louvre from line 1 at metro stop Palais Royal – Musée du Louvre or Louvre Rivoli.

### Musée d'Orsay

The Musée d'Orsay is housed in a former train station directly across from the Tuileries on the other side of the river Seine. It houses pieces from 1848-1915 and is largely known as an impressionist and post-impressionist museum. It houses several masterpieces by painters such as [Monet](#), [Manet](#),

[Degas](#), [Renoir](#), [Cézanne](#), [Seurat](#), [Gauguin](#) and [Van Gogh](#). The museum is open every day except Mondays from 9.30 am to 6 pm and to 9.45pm on Thursdays. To access the museum you can use metro Stop Concorde on line 1 and cross the footbridge over the river or use Assemblée Nationale on line 12. If you have a French visa, and are under 26, you can get a free ticket. Otherwise it is 8€ for a ticket to the museum. While the museum is home to many masterpieces it is easy to do an entire overview of the museum in about two hours. Some works that you will recognize are paintings by Monet, Renoir, and the self portrait of Van Gogh. There are also several statues in the museum by masters of the 19<sup>th</sup> century such as Rodin.

### Musee de l'Orangerie

The Musee de l'Orangerie is located at the end of the Tuileries. You can access the museum by walking across the Tuileries from the Louvre or at metro stop Concorde on lines 1, 8, and 12. The museum is open from 9am-6pm and is closed on Tuesdays. The museum is free every first Sunday of the month and if you have a French visa and are under 26. The highlight of this museum is the series of water lily painting by Monet on the second floor. What makes this exhibit even more impressive is that the paintings are displayed in the original manner as they were intended to be viewed by Monet. To see these works you just need to go to the second floor. Other works in the museums are also from the impressionist and post-impressionist period. You can also find works [Paul Cézanne](#), [Henri Matisse](#), [Amedeo Modigliani](#), [Claude Monet](#), [Pablo Picasso](#), and [Pierre-Auguste Renoir](#). You can expect to spend roughly an hour in this museum if just browsing the masterpieces.

### Musee Rodin

The museum itself is located in a beautiful 18<sup>th</sup> century French mansion with expansive gardens. Just being able to see a building such as this with its original gardens is a sight to see itself. Rodin is one of the most famous French sculptors who was active in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. His most famous work that will be easily recognized is his statue of the thinker which can be found in the garden. The museum was Rodin's own workshop and residence near the end of his life. On display at the museum are a few Van Gogh, Renoir, and Monet's from the sculptors own personal collection. The museum is free if you are under 26 and have a French visa. Otherwise it is 5€ for the museum and 1€ for the gardens – make sure to add the gardens as this is where a few of the masterpieces are, outside in their original environment. To arrive at the museum you will want metro stop Varennes on line 13, which has a few replicas of Rodin's works at the station.

### Les Invalides

The Invalides is a large, sprawling complex that was originally built by Louis XIV in the 1600's to house retired soldiers. Today it is home to the museums for France's military history, dating back to medieval times, and the church which is home to the remains of several of France's greatest generals and Napoleon Bonaparte. Tickets are free for those with a French visa and under 26. Otherwise a ticket that costs 9€ will give you access to Napoleon's tomb and the museums on site. To access Napoleons tomb you must go in front entrance of the building with the large dome (it can't be accessed from the army museum). I would highly recommend browsing through the army museum. The museum is over 2

floors and spans from the medieval times through world war II. There is an entire room dedicated to medieval type of armor, very interesting to see. You will see things you didn't know existed, such as full armor for children. The amount of various weapons, with prototypes, is awe-inspiring – such as a triple barreled pistol pointing in three separate directions. You can also see the full horse riding armor and gear of Louis XIV. There are exhibits on the revolutionary war – along with Marquise de Lafayette's uniform and effects. The exhibits proceed up to WWII where you can see spy equipment and how the French resistance was able to aid the allies in WWII. I would highly recommend at least taking a small trip through the museum of the army after seeing the tomb of Napoleon. Les Invalides can be accessed from Metro stop Varenne on line 13, Invalides on line 8, or Invalides on the RER C.

### Centre Georges Pompidou

The Pompidou is just as famous for its building as the works of art that it houses. The Pompidou is the largest modern art museum in Europe. It is home to works by Georges Bracques, Picasso, and several major modern artists. The building was completed in 1977 and soon became the most hated building in Paris. The building is very modern. It places all of its skeleton on the outside of the building, large vents, stairs, and everything else. The building has become renowned for its architecture and one several awards and is now fairly widely accepted. In front of the center there is a small plaza area which is home to several street performers. It should only take an hour or two for a good look through the museum; being modern art not everything will be of interest. If you are under 26 and have a French visa entrance is free. Otherwise cost of entry is only 5€. To arrive at the museum use Chatelet metro on line 1 or Chatelet – Les Halles on the RER A, B, and D. The museum is open from 11am – 9pm everyday except Tuesday. If you do not want to go to the museum you should at least check out the panoramic view on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor at a cost of 3€.

### Churches

#### Notre Dame

The most well known and popular church in Paris. Construction of the cathedral was started in 1160 and lasted until 1365. This site has been a site of churches and temples dating back to Roman times. Today far beneath the courtyard in front of the church are the remains of the foundation of the Roman temple to Jupiter but they are off limits to the public. It is free to enter into the church. Most of the time the lines to enter the church are not very long and it is very easy to get into the church. However around Easter, especially Easter Monday since it is a holiday, it takes an extraordinarily long time to gain access to the church. The west rose window is of particular interest as it still has its original stain glass from the 1200's. The cathedral is open every day from 8am to 6:45pm. There are free tours given of the cathedral. They meet at the great organ in English at 2 pm Wednesday, 2pm Thursday, and 2:30pm on Fridays. These tours last about an hour and give a good history of the church and the artwork within. You can visit the treasury of Notre Dame for 2€. The treasury holds religious relics of saints and holds the crown of thorns and a piece of the original cross. You can also go up the western tower of Notre Dame for a very good view and see the hunchback hiding with his bell. The tower I believe costs

around 5€ or is free with a French visa and under 26. To get to Notre Dame the best stops are Cite on Line 4 and Saint-Michel Notre Dame on RER B and C.

### Sainte Chapelle

Sainte was originally built by Louis IX, who became Saint Louis, to hold the crown of thorns and a piece of the cross he had bought from the holy roman emperor in Constantinople. He paid 120,000 livres for the crown of thorns while the church to hold the relics only cost 40,000 in comparison. While the church no longer holds the relics today, they are in Notre Dame, it is considered the most beautiful church. The colors inside and the stain glass are a sight to behold. Sainte Chapelle was the personal chapel of Louis IX. The Sainte Chapelle can be found straight across from the courtyard of Notre Dame on Ile-de-la-cite. Cost of entrance is 5€ and well worth it. The Sainte Chapelle is open from 9:30am-6pm each day. Cite on line 4 is the best metro stop for access.

### Sacre Coeur

The Sacre Coeur is that large, domed white building that you see on the only hill in Paris. It is free to enter into the church. It is relatively new, being consecrated at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century at the site of the martyrdom of Saint-Denis. The church is home to the largest mosaic in the world. You can go to the top of the dome with a spectacular view for just 5€. The church is open every day from 6am – 10:30pm. In front of the church you can walk to the right and up the rail and down to a small area with benches for a free, spectacular view of Paris from the highest point in the city. You can access the bottom of the hill in front of the Sacre Coeur at metro stop Anvers on line 2.

### Saint Sulpice

Saint Sulpice is a large baroque style church in the 6<sup>th</sup>, almost seeming out of place with its circular towers. Today it is undergoing large renovations and is covered with scaffolding. Entry into the church is free where you can see murals painted by Delacroix and one of the largest pipe organs in the world. The church was also featured in the Da Vinci Code movie with the “Rose line”. In reality, the “rose line” is a meridian used by priests to determine the equinox so they could know the exact timing of Easter. Saint Sulpice can be found at the metro stop of the same name on line 4.

### St. Denis Basilica

This church is important to the history of France and how much of Europe looks. The building was the first gothic style building and started the transformation across Europe to this style of building which became prominent for centuries. Here you will find the final resting place of all but three French kings. Cost of access is around 5€ or free with an EU visa. You can arrive at the basilica on line 13 at Basilique de Saint Denis. The basilica is open 10am – 6pm.

## Attractions

### Arc de Triomphe

After taking a walk down the Champs Elysees check out the Arc de Triomphe at the end. Here all seven major boulevards converge into a giant round about around the arc. You can try to play a game of real life frogger or take the safe route of the underground tunnel. Once reaching the ticket window at the end of the underground tunnel you can purchase a ticket to go to the top of the Arc. Free under 26 with French visa or for 5.50€. You can walk the roughly 300 stairs to the top or you can take the lift to the top. The Arc is open from 10am – 11pm and offers one of the best views of Paris from the top. I would recommend going at night to get a great view of the city, specifically around 10pm around when the Eiffel tower will do its light show. To access the monument by metro you want Charles de Gaulle – Etoile on line 1.

### Arenes de Lutèce

This is a hidden gem that you more than likely don't know about in Paris. It is one of the only remnants of Roman times in Paris when it was a village called Lutèce. The arena could sit 15,000 and was used for theater and gladiator combat. Many knew that there was an old arena in the area but it was not discovered until 1860 and was open as a public park in 1896. Today you can walk around what used to be the floor used for gladiator combat. Today it is used by children playing soccer and is a Wi-Fi hotspot – quite the change to be surfing the web where people used to be engaged in combat to the death. Behind the arena is a small garden area and it is actually a nice place to enjoy lunch in the 5<sup>th</sup>. The following image best explains how to find the arena.



### Les Catacombs

In what used to be the stone mines of Paris today is home to several thousand bones. Paris boomed in population rapidly and in the 1700's had a problem with where to bury its dead. Its

graveyards were full and a sanitation problem was on hand. So, the old stone mines were chosen to house the bones of the dead. Over several years the bones were transported to the mines and arranged in an artistic manner. The catacombs have been drawing visitors since 1867. The catacombs are open from 10am – 5pm and closed on Mondays. It costs 4€ to enter the catacombs and at times there can be a wait because there is a limit to how many people they allow to be down at one time. Access from metro Denfert-Rochereau on line 4 or on the RER B.

## Eiffel Tower

This one really needs no explanation. The Eiffel Tower is the symbol of France. When originally built for the world fair in the late 1800's it was universally hated by all the French. One man hated the tower so much that he ate his lunch under the tower everyday for the rest of his life because it was the only place in the city where he didn't have to look at the eyesore. The tower was originally meant to be torn down after the fair but was saved by the military when they realized a 1,000 foot steel structure made a good radio tower. Pay no attention to the large amount of immigrants trying to sell things to you. The Eiffel tower is the most visited paid attraction in the world. If you visit around 11am or later expect to stand in line for a very long time. If time of day doesn't matter try to go in the morning when the line will be the quickest. It is open from 9 am – 11pm nearly every day of the year. Going to the top costs 11.50€. You can also walk the stairs to the 2<sup>nd</sup> level, one less than the top, for 3.50 or just go to the 2<sup>nd</sup> level by lift for 6.50 but it's the Eiffel Tower, why not go all the way to the top? You can get to the Eiffel Tower on line 6 at Bir-Hakeim, this metro line also runs above ground in the area of the Eiffel Tower for some amazing views, line 9 at Trocadero, or from the RER C Champs de Mars – Tour Eiffel.

## Palais Garnier

This building is also referred to as the Opera Garnier or the Opera of Paris. This building was constructed in the late 1800's and is considered a masterpiece of neo-classical architecture and has been the inspiration for several buildings around the world. The building was the inspiration for The Phantom of the Opera. The underground lake is not fictional, it actually exists underneath the building. You can tour the building without seeing a show. Tickets for a guided tour of the building are roughly 10€. If possible I would highly recommend seeing a show here. I never thought I would enjoy seeing a ballet but I can say that I thoroughly enjoyed the show. The tickets to the show were purchased by the academic program I used but was only about 40€. This ticket put me in the closest box to the stage with only one other person who I knew. If choosing to visit a show here know that dress is very formal at the opera house, men wear suits and women dresses. To arrive at the building you want to use the metro stop opera at lines 3, 7, and 8.

## Pantheon

Originally built as a church, today the building serves as the final resting place for some of the most influential figures from French society. Cost of accessing the crypt and going to the top of the large dome is free with a French visa or 5€ without. In the crypt you can find polarizing figures such as Victor Hugo, Voltaire, Rousseau, Braille (invented the Braille system), and many others. Going to the top occurs every 45 minutes and takes roughly 30 minutes. At the top you can get a great view of the city from a

different area of the city compared to the Eiffel tower, Notre Dame, or the Sacre Coeur. In the center of the pantheon you will see a large pendulum hanging from the inside of the large dome. This is the remnants of the original experiment that determined that the earth rotates on an axis. To get to the pantheon use line 10 stop Cardinal Lemoine or RER B at Luxembourg.

### Pere Lachaise Cemetery

This cemetery is home to several prominent figures of the last 200 years and is the most visited cemetery in the world. You can arrive at this cemetery at Philippe Auguste on line 2 or Gambetta on line 3. The cemetery is open from 7:30am – 6pm. At the main entrance you can receive a free map which you will need. The winding roads of the cemetery are named. Make sure that you go up the hill to see the views from the top of the cemetery. With the map it will make it easy to locate some of the most famous residents of the cemetery. Some of the famous graves are:

- **Mideastern Section/Principal Entry:**
  - Colette (writer)
  - Alfred de Musset (poet)
  - Baron Haussmann (19th-century architect who designed modern Paris)
  - Frédéric Chopin (classical musician)
  
- **South-Central Section:**
  - Molière, La Fontaine (playwrights)
  - Victor Hugo (writer)
  - Jim Morrison (American rock musician)
  - Sarah Bernhardt (actress)
  
- **Northern Section:**
  - Richard Wright (American writer)
  - Isadora Duncan (American dancer)
  - Marcel Proust (writer)
  - Delacroix (painter)
  - Guillaume Apollinaire (poet)
  - Balzac (writer)
  
- **Far-east and Southeast Corner:**
  - Oscar Wilde (Irish writer)
  - Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas (American writers)
  - Edith Piaf (musician)
  - Modigliani (Italian painter)
  - Paul Eluard (poet)

### Canal St. Martin

This area is becoming one of the newest trendy areas in Paris. This nearly 3 mile long canal was built by Napoleon to bring fresh water into the city. Today the canal is covered up at its end but it's very picturesque being lined by trees with several bridges and locks. You can walk the length of the canal and

enjoy a picnic at its edges. The area is home to many interesting shops and delicious restaurants. You can also catch concerts here for free at night. Walk the distance of the canal by foot and you are bound to find several interesting things. Also watch for boats going up the canal, several of the bridges still work today and will open up as the boats traverse the lock. You can start at the north end of the canal from metro stop Juares on line 5 or 2 or the southern end at Bastille on lines 1, 5, and 8.

### Ile Saint-Louis

The ile Saint Louis is found by crossing a bridge directly behind Notre Dame. This island is small and is good for wandering. Here is where you find some of the most expensive real estate in the city. It's fun to traverse the small roads, see the old aristocratic buildings, and look at the shops. One of the best gems in all of Paris is found on this tiny island, Berthillon – a small ice cream shop. This ice cream shop is renowned for making its ice cream in house and using no artificial flavors or preservatives. Find this shop on the island and it will be well worth it.

### The Grande Mosque de Paris

The grand mosque of Paris is a very interesting place to visit. It was built by the French government as a sign of gratitude for the 100,000 Muslims who died fighting against Germany in WWI. In WWII the mosque served as a point of resistance against Germany and provided fake Muslim birth certificates for those of Jewish heritage. Attached to the mosque is a very delicious café/restaurant. This café has amazing décor in Islamic style. The food and treats are amazing. One interesting thing about the café is the two chandeliers in the two dining areas – there are little finches that live in each of them. When people leave their table and there are little crumbs left from their pasty treats the birds will fly down and devour the crumbs and fly back to their chandelier roost. It is a very fun sight.

### Ice Skating in Paris

If you are in Paris at the beginning of March and before you can enjoy Ice Skating. There is a large ice skating rink placed in front of city hall (hotel de ville) for many of the winter months. For around 6€ you can enjoy ice skating in the heart of Paris with the background of a building from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. You can access the ice rink at metro stop Hotel de Ville on line 1.

### Champs Elysees

The Champs Elysees has been known as the most beautiful boulevard in the world. The boulevard has been the subject of many of the greatest painters since the 1800's. Today you can find several important museums, such as the petit palais and grand palais, at the west end of the boulevard as well as a park. The east end near the Arc de Triomphe is what is associated with popular culture today. This is where you will find all of the luxury shops such as Cartier and Louis Vuitton. The street is home to some of the highest rents in the world, 1,100 sq. ft. costs \$1.5 million per year. While it is fun to browse the area it is not a place to buy things. The area is very expensive and touristy and you will over pay for anything that you buy. The restaurants are overpriced and are nothing spectacular. For example, there is a McDonalds on the Champs Elysees and a Big Mac costs almost a euro more than anywhere else in the city. Start at Charles de Gaulle – Etoile on line 1 if you want to start at the western end of the boulevard and at Concorde on line 1, 8, and 12 to start at the eastern end of the boulevard.

## Best Panoramic Views of Paris

There are several areas to get great panoramic views of the city, some being free others being more expensive. The best place to get a view of the city at night is from the top of the Arc de Triomphe or from the top of Montmartre at the Sacre Coeur. The Eiffel tower is an obvious choice to get a bird's eye view of the city. There is also another option, the Tour Montparnasse. This is the only skyscraper within the city limits and is universally despised. While not being a terribly ugly building it makes the top 10 worst buildings in the world list every year due to how out of place it is. You can go to the top of the skyscraper for a view of the city for 8€. Other options for views are from the top of Notre Dame, the Pantheon, and from the Centre Pompidou. Each option offers different views of the city from varying height levels. You can spot something of interest from each one that you find interesting which can set you on an adventure by foot.

## La Defense

La Defense is an area just on the outskirts of Paris proper on the west side. It is the business district that has all of the large skyscrapers. The area is interesting to visit for its very artistic layout and the Grand Arc de la Defense from which a view straight down to the Louvre is rather impressive. If you want to do some affordable shopping there is a large shopping center here that can be accessed from the metro stop. To arrive in the area take line 1 all the way to its end point – La Defense. It takes a longer time than the RER but the RER stop is outside of zones 1 and 2. If you are caught without a ticket for the zone, and there are a lot of officers checking tickets at that stop, you will be subject to a 55€ fine.

## Day Trips from the Paris Area

### Versailles

Versailles is 10.6 miles from the center of Paris and is known for the Chateau of Versailles. Historically Versailles is very important. The treaty to end the Revolutionary War and WWI were signed here. The city served as a plan for Washington D.C. To get to the chateau you want to take RER C to stop Versailles Rive Gauche. Make sure when getting on to the RER C that the train is branching off to this stop. There will be a board which lights up all the stops. This should be the terminus of the train so if looking at a screen the name should be listed as the end. The stop is in Zone 4 and will require a separate ticket to go there and back into Paris. The cost of the ticket each way will be roughly 14€ round trip. Access to the chateau is included in the Paris Museum Pass. You can buy a ticket to access everything on the grounds for 18€ or just the chateau for 15€. The grounds are also free on the first Sunday of every month. It is open from 9am – 5:30pm or 6:30 pm depending on when you visit. Be sure to grab a free audio guide when you enter. It is possible to spend all day in the gardens. The gardens are best visited in April through September. The spectacular fountains do not have water in them during the colder months. It is truly a sight to behold the opulence of the chateau.

### Champagne/Reims

The champagne region is another region that is a fun trip from Paris. The drink gets its name from this region. Only true Champagne comes from this region. Champagne produced in other regions is only sparkling wine. The place to start your trip to this region is at Reims - a metropolitan area of nearly 200,000 known for its cathedral. The cathedral of Reims is the site where nearly all of the French kings

were crowned. The cathedral is an impressive site and is still under renovations from the two world wars. You can still see bullet holes dotting sides of the building. Reims is about a 45min to two hour train ride from Paris depending on which type of train is taken. Trains to Reims will cost on average 11€ to 20€ and the same for a return to Paris. Make sure that the point you arrive and leave is Reims gare. This is the station in the city. You can also use the Champagne Ardenne TGV station which is 8km outside of the city if you explore the region. When in Reims check out the cathedral and the musee des beaux arts which is opposite the square in front of the cathedral. The museum is closed on Tuesdays and is open from 10am – 12pm and 2pm – 6pm. The cost of entrance is only 3€. It has works by masters such as Gauguin, Monet, tapestries from the 1500's, and several other Renaissance works.

While in the area take a trip to one of the many champagne houses to see the elaborate process that is involved in making champagne. I would recommend visiting Taittinger. The wine cave used for production which you have the chance to tour is from old chalk mines used all the way back to Roman times. A tour of the cellar takes one hour from the middle of March to the middle of November you can get a tour everyday from 9:30am to 1pm or from 2pm – 5:30pm. It can be found in Reims at 9, Place Saint-Nicaise à Reims. The cost of the tour is only 10€ and you even get to have a sample at the end of the tour. If you go during the week you can see the bottling process in action.

## The Loire Valley

The Loire Valley is home to one of the best wine producing areas in the world and is also where French aristocracy decided to build many of the chateaus that are associated with the French countryside. There are several chateaux in the area that are worth visiting. I only visited two of the many and I will recommend these two. However, with a little research there may be some that interest you more than these two. A large list of chateaux and pictures can be found at the Wikipedia page for Loire Valley. The two that I will recommend are Chenonceau and Amboise. Chenonceau, my personal favorite, is situated across the Cher river. At the site you have an Orangerie, two gardens, and a large wooded area. There is a restaurant on site with reasonable prices where you can eat. I would also recommend going off the beaten path and walking through the woods as you can find some interesting things. Chenonceau is open every day from 9am to 7:30pm at a cost of 8€ with a student I.D. It takes one hour to get to Chenonceau from Paris with the TGV (fast train). There is a stop right outside the gates with a road leading up to the ticket office and the chateau. This train stop is called Chenonceaux and it will cost roughly 20€ each direction.

11 miles away from Chenonceau is the town of Amboise and its chateau of the same name. If you are hungry in front of the chateau and by the river is a market that is open many days of the week. At this market you can buy fresh food and also get a meal cooked for you at good prices. It is at this chateau where you will find the tomb of Leonardo da Vinci. He spent his last few years at a small manor by the chateau working here under the French king Francois I. It costs 8.30€ for a visit to the chateau. The hours of operation vary depending on the time of year but are normally between 9am – 6pm or 7pm. Train tickets cost 10€ to 20€ each way depending on how fast you wish to get there, anywhere between 1hr and 2.5hrs.

## General Information for Study Abroad

### Planning for Long Trips (i.e. Spring Break)

Wherever you study abroad at you will more than likely have a period of time where you have a long, uninterrupted period where you will be able to travel. The most important thing you can have for this period is a plan. Know where you want to go and what you want to see. I will use my own personal example of planning for my spring break to lend examples. Know that depending on the time of the season where you want to visit might not be open or it might be completely different than you are expecting. I studied abroad in Paris and had spring break from somewhere around April 18<sup>th</sup> to May 2<sup>nd</sup> officially, about 14 official break days. I added in the weekend to this and it was a break of 16 days. 16 days is a long time to do traveling. Without a good plan you can lose time waiting to make travel connections or just trying to figure out where to go next. I had a generally idea of the main places I wanted to go around the second week of February. By the third week I had found someone who wanted to go to some of the same places and was willing to go. In the third week of February I started getting a tentative plan for spring break in the middle of April. I got ideas of countries I wanted to visit, estimates of travel times by various methods of transportation, cost of each method, places to stay, how much it cost to stay at different locations, etc. Around three weeks before your travel date you should have an idea of what methods of transport you are going to use because after this plane tickets will become much more expensive. I started my trip a couple days early and visited Greece, Italy, and Croatia. I started the furthest possible, Greece, and finished in Italy before heading back to Paris. This method made travel expenses the cheapest. When you decide where you are going to stay in each place you visit have a good idea of where the place is located. If walking from train stations or public transportation it can be easy to get lost and very frustrating. Take a look at google streetview if possible and get a picture of what the area look likes. Have back up plans for when transportation situations can go wrong. As I left for spring break, luckily two days early, the volcano in Iceland had exploded and grounded all air traffic. Being far enough away from this in Greece I had no problems. However many of my friends ended up stranded for days and lost half of their spring break due to air traffic backlog and strikes on the train system. Strikes can be prevalent in European countries and interrupt travel plans for a couple days. Have an idea of other things to do in this time, a short trip to a neighboring area for example, or know how to get alternate transport. I made a small calendar with Microsoft word laying out times of key travel dates and what the form of transport was with alternate methods. I took this with me just in case an issue arose, such as riots in Greece which did happen during my time there but was a non-issue. If you take time planning out your long trips, know what you want to see, and have a general idea of how to see them it will save you much time on your trips and make the experience more enjoyable as you are not stressed with how to find these places or having to try to ask for help in a country you don't understand the language.

Greece

Athens

### Getting to Athens

The easiest way to get to Athens is by plane. It is probably possible to get to Athens by train but becomes a hassle more than likely with the slower and less advanced system of tracks in eastern Europe. If you are in Italy it is also possible to get there using ferries which can be found on the eastern coast, more specifically the lower boot. Coming from western Europe the easiest way is by plane. A one

way ticket from Paris to Athens in the middle of April cost roughly 70€ through easyjet. Easyjet provided a good flight and service to the Athens airport. The airport in Athens is easy to navigate. Upon deplaning you walk up stairs to a baggage area, through a door that says “customs” however there wasn’t really anybody to check anything. I remember thinking, “who is going to check my passport” and next thing I knew I was outside.

### Getting into Athens from the Airport

The airport in Athens is about 40 minutes from Athens. You can get a taxi, which I am unsure of the cost, I would estimate 35€, or take the train into the city. Upon leaving the airport go outside, cross the street, and follow the signs with the train logo. You will eventually reach an area with a ticket window. A ticket into the city costs 8€. Once into downtown Athens you will find a very modern subway system as it was just constructed for the Athens Olympic Games. There are only 3 lines in the city. Know what stop your destination is by so you can make the proper changes once in the city. You can also take the bus. This bus picks up directly in front of the airport and only costs about 3.50€. The bus you want to take you into the city is X95 and will drop you off in Syntagma Square. In this square there is a metro station and if used within 90 minutes of purchase the bus ticket will allow you to make your connection the subway.

### Getting around in Athens

There are three main ways to get around in Athens: walking, by bus, and by metro. Bus systems can be confusing in other countries and this is something that I did not use in my stay in Athens. Buying tickets for the metro is very inexpensive. If you are tired or need to go a long distance single tickets are only 0.80€. I found Athens to be a very easy city to walk. Nearly all of the main attractions are located around the acropolis and if you are staying relatively close walking is one of the easiest methods to get around and you will see a lot of interesting things.

### Sites and Attractions in Athens

Nearly all attractions and sights are free in Athens with an EU visa if you are under 26 or with your student card. In my time in Athens I don’t believe that I once paid for any museum or sight that I visited. That being said, the most obvious attraction in Athens is the Acropolis. Be careful when visiting as sometimes the hours that are posted are not correct. The day I visited they had listed hours of 8pm but were closing at 5:30 pm. This was right before the first rounds of riots started and many people at public sites would close early. Keep this in mind when visiting. Go to the national archaeological museum. After that get your map and start walking to see the other sites. Many of the sites are close together and you will see and find interesting areas on your way. For example, check out the large “flea market” by the Plaka area. If you need some sunglasses pick them up here. Athens has some good cheap products. I bought a few pairs of RayBans for 5€. They are more than likely fake but look and feel like the real deal. If you know some French it may help you in haggling a good price as many of the people selling sunglasses are from North Africa and don’t often get to operate in their most native language of French. I would count on spending an hour or so at each museum you wish to visit and at the acropolis. Other than that it all depends on how much time you want to spend exploring and dissecting the ancient ruins you find.

## Eating in Athens

When you are tired and want to eat head to the Plaka. There are several restaurants in the area with a couple of streets being nothing but restaurants. Here you can eat outside and enjoy a three course meal with a stunning view of the acropolis. The best part is that the food here is not expensive. Unlike other places such as France or England where you will pay for such a view this is not the case in Athens. For the view you have and the food you would expect to be spending 50€ and up. You can get an amazing three course meal here for 20€ or less. The area of the Plaka is also rich in culture. Eating here you will be able to look to your left and see ruins of the ancient agora. It has been a busy area since 600BC. It is a great place to eat and be surrounded by so much history.

## Getting to the Port in Athens

The easiest way to get to the Greek islands is from the port Piraeus. It is from here that you will find all the major ferry lines that service all the lines. You can take the metro line 1 all the way to the port and when you leave the station there is a bus that will take you to the Port. You can walk if you choose as it is easy to spot the port. The port is very large so know what number gate your boat is leaving from as it may be easier to take one of the shuttle buses inside the port – it can take 30 minutes to walk the port (the same port used in ancient times). There are also buses that go to the port, one bus being X96. It's good to have an idea of what buses go to the port. It was night when I went to the port and they had construction on a few stops on line 1. It was necessary to make a change to a bus. However, the man responsible did not speak much English but insured that the bus would take us to the port. Luckily, on the bus there was a man from Italy who lived in Athens who spoke good English who informed us that we would need to get off in front of the Olympic stadium and then get back on the metro stop that was there. Without this knowledge it could have been a very stressful situation trying to catch the ferry on time. It takes about 40 minutes to get to the Port from Athens so factor this time into getting to the port. I would say planning to get to the port an hour before your ferry leaves is a very safe bet to ensure for delays but not waste a lot of time.

## The Greek Islands

### The Greek Islands

The Greek Islands are a very fun place to visit. There are several islands scattered all throughout the Aegean Sea. These islands are often classified into groupings and it is easiest to travel to islands that are in the same grouping. This website is an invaluable resource if going to the islands and has a listing of islands by grouping <http://www.greektravel.com/greekislands/index.html>. I stayed in the Cyclades grouping visiting Santorini, Ios, and Mykonos. There are low and high seasons for tourism and prices will be different for each period. The islands start opening in the middle of April and reach the busiest season in August. I visited the islands in middle to late April. I think this is a very good time to visit the islands. While the rest of Europe has temperatures still in the 40's and 50's the temperatures are in the low to high 70's in the islands. The water is cold, but it is swimmable and there are not large crowds to deal with at the beaches. If you visit the islands in the low season the locals are very friendly as they do not have to deal with a large amount of tourists and are happy to see some of the first visitors of the year. Also this is around the only two week period of the year when the islands are green and blooming. When visiting the islands you need an idea of what islands you want to visit and build an itinerary. This makes it easy to know what connections you can make from which islands and when. This is important if you need to get back to Athens at a certain time. If not you can just hop from island to island based on

what is available at the ticket offices in the port of each island. You can also leave from Santorini and Crete by airplane if need be. Also use this link to research the islands <http://www.greektravel.com/islands.htm>.

## The Ferry System

If not in peak season the ferry system can pose a problem if on a tight schedule. There are roughly four major lines that serve the Greek islands which operate lines to different islands at different intervals. The four major lines are Minoan, ANEK, Hellenic, and Blue Star. I would recommend using the company's website to see where you can go from each island and a rough idea of the schedule for the time period. The only ticket I would recommend booking in advance would be your first ferry from Athens into the islands. I started by going to the furthest point I was going to, Santorini. I used ANEK and took a 9 hour slow ferry at night. I shared a cabin with the person I was traveling with and this was a great option. It cost about 50€ each and was our travel and lodging combined. When possible I would recommend going through the ferry company's website to purchase your ticket. Make sure to look through their website and look at the promotions they are offering to take the most discounts possible. Once in the islands you can see when ferries travel between islands. You have the options of superfast ferries, which greatly cut the travel time, or normal slow ferries. Obviously the fast ferries will cost about double but also cut the travel time in half or more. An example of cost between islands: From Santorini to Ios was about 5-10€, from Ios to Mykonos a fast ferry was about 30-40€, and from Mykonos to Athens was about 20€ for a normal ferry. You can get an idea of the cost of ferries before going to the islands by looking at company websites, but again I would not recommend buying them beforehand as they are easily purchased in the ports – just know which line you will be using. If in doubt you can go to offices in the port and see their schedule on the wall of where and when they are departing for the current day and the next day.

## Santorini

### Where to stay in Santorini

Take a look at [hostelworld.com](http://hostelworld.com) or [hostelbookers.com](http://hostelbookers.com). It is hard to go wrong with anywhere you would choose to stay on the island. If you go in a low season you will see surprisingly low prices and if you wanted to you could stay at a very nice hotel for a very reasonable price. In Santorini I chose to stay at Stelio's Place. The room was only 10€ a night and was amazing. The family it is operated by is very friendly and speaks perfect English. I had forgot my iPod charger and the daughter had an extra one that she gave to me to use while I was there. The location is literally a stone's throw from the beach. It is located on Perissa beach, one of the only black sand beaches in the world. Included in the stay is free pickup from the airport or the port and a transfer back to the port or airport. I would highly recommend staying here if you visit Santorini.

### Attractions and Activities

The island is the attraction here. Santorini has perhaps the most amazing terrain of all the Greek islands. The island complex was formed by a series of volcanic explosions – the largest of which causing the event which destroyed the Minoan civilization on the island of Crete. Make sure to go on a sailing trip which takes you around the island, to the still rural northern island, the volcanic center, and to finish at Oia. One of these boat trips costs only 20€. Some will even take you to go swim in the hot springs by

one part of the island. There are several beaches on the island. The towns perched on top of 1000 foot cliffs are spectacular. Visit the towns of Fira and Oia. Oia is home to what is considered the best sunset in the world. I would highly recommend visiting the Red Beach.

### Eating in Santorini

There are several fine places to eat in Santorini. If staying or visiting the Perissa beach there are restaurants lining the road behind the beach. Many of these restaurants are good and offer several different types of cuisine in the style of many countries. They all will have English speaking staff. At dinner at one restaurant on this beach one night I had a waitress who was from Chicago. Prices for food is very reasonable and is often around 10-15€ for dinner. Also be certain to have lunch or dinner in Fira. At the top of the town there are several clubs and restaurants on the edge of the cliff with spectacular views of the island system. Prices are very reasonable here as well. I would recommend trying some calamari at any of these establishments. Try to sit at a table that is shaded as the sun is very intense. I am not sure about tipping in Greece so I would always leave around 10 percent. It is also customary with Greek tradition that you will receive a shot of a traditional type of Greek liquor after your meal. If it isn't busy where you are eating and you have had a good conversation with your host this after dinner tradition sometimes carries on for awhile.

### Transportation in Santorini

There is a bus system that spans the island and is inexpensive to use. The bus costs about a euro or two for each trip. However the bus is very infrequent at times and can be up to an hour at each stop. The main method of transportation is to rent a four wheeler or a car. Renting is done by the day and is very inexpensive. Small 50cc four wheelers are only about 10-12€ per day. If you want something a little faster with more power there are larger models that can be rented for about 15€. I very much thought I would fulfill my wish of driving a smart car on this island, but the minimum age to rent a car in the islands is 23. If you are 23 it is very inexpensive to rent a car. There is a large selection from small sedans to jeeps and prices are around 18-30€ a day. Traffic laws are much the same as in the states. However, there really isn't much of a police force to enforce traffic laws so they are very lax in Santorini – as well as most of the smaller islands.

## los

### Getting to los

To get to los you can take a direct ferry from the port in Athens or you can easily get to this island from many others in the Cyclades system. It takes about 4 hours to get from Athens to los. The price would depend on the season but I would estimate around 25-30€ for a slow ferry and 50€ for a fast ferry. Traveling time will vary if you are already in the islands upon distance from los and if you take a slow or fast ferry. Once in the islands I would not expect to spend more than 10€ if going to los from any of the Cyclades by slow ferry.

### Activities and Attractions

los is known today as the party island. In high season this is where many students across Europe will go. This isn't how you have to spend your time on this island though. If you go during low season

there are very few people here and you have most of the island to yourself. The island is home to Myloptas beach, one of the top 10 beaches in Europe. At this beach you can find nearly every water sport activity you could wish to find. There are several beaches on the island that can be visited. Also at the top of the island is the supposed tomb of the legendary Greek writer Homer.

### Staying in Ios

There are two main places I would recommend to stay at in Ios – prices will vary depending if you go in high or low season. These two places are Far Out Beach Club or Francesco's – both of which are right on Miloptas beach. You can get a two person bungalow for 8€ a person in May at Far Out Beach Club which is where I stayed. There is a pool area in the front with lounge area and a full service restaurant. Both places will also pick you up from the port and drive you back to the port when you are ready to leave. The people working are very nice and laid back. On my drive in the guy taking us to the hostel made a call and upgraded our room to an even better bungalow since they weren't that busy for the exact same price.

### Eating in Ios

Other than eating at the beaches there is one main town area above Miloptas beach. In this town you can find several traditional options for eating, very delicious traditional Greek food. I do not remember the name or exact location of the restaurant but if you walk to the highest point of the town you will find a small square with some windmills. At this point there is a restaurant in the small square. It is a traditional restaurant and there are families that will be there eating depending on when you decide to go. This restaurant will give you a feast of traditional Greek food at a reasonable price of around 15-20€. This restaurant was so good that I decided to eat there twice in the same day.

### Transportation in Ios

There is a bus system in Ios but it is very infrequent and costs about a euro or two each time you use it. You can also rent four wheelers and cars on the island. To rent a car you must be 23 and it costs about 18€ and up depending on what you want. You can rent 4-wheelers from 10€ up. You can often catch rides with the shuttle that picks up and takes people to the port if there is room in van. People here are also very nice and will sometimes offer you a ride to where you are going if you are walking.

## Mykonos

### Getting to Mykonos

You can easily get to Mykonos from many of the other islands in the Cyclades. To get an idea of travel time and cost look at the websites of the four major lines. To get to Mykonos from Athens it costs around 30€ and I believe slow ferries are the only option. This trip takes about 4.5 to 5 hours.

### Staying in Mykonos

There are several options for places to stay in Mykonos. You can choose to stay in the main town area near the port, on the beach further north, or in a non-central location. I stayed at Mama's Pension just a mile north of the port on its own beach. It is family run and the room that was provided

was very nice. They provided pick up from the port and transportation back to the port to leave. A room for two people was 20€ a person. Have a look at [hostelbookers.com](http://hostelbookers.com) for other options. There are many great options on the island around the same price that be more suited for what you are looking for.

### Attractions and Activities

This is the island where the rich and the powerful come to from all over the world. In busy season it is truly an island for people watching. In the port in front of the main town area, Chora, you will see several yachts make anchor. Chora in itself is a place to explore. Walk the winding roads and get lost. Look in the shops and enjoy some food. There are several beaches on the island which can be visited. One beach that I would recommend is Paradise beach. If you visit in low season it is very interesting to visit the beaches. Mykonos is known for its beaches that are occupied by beach front clubs where you would be able to see celebs from around the world. In low season it is like a ghost town. You just walk through a beach club that is being remodeled for the new season to get to the beach where at times you can have the beach entirely to yourself. There may be people that are putting posts in the ground for the many umbrella covered areas for lounge chairs but as long as you are not in their way they don't care that you are there.

There is the island of Delos that is a great site to visit. It is a 30 minute boat ride from Mykonos. The island of Delos is a tiny island that was home to over 30,000 people during ancient Greek times. The island was the site of the birth of Apollo. Here you can visit a ruined island. There are ruins of this ancient Greek city all over the island. You can walk the old roads and see the remnants of old Greek houses, several of which are in superb shape on the east side of the island. It takes about 3 hours at the island and bring some water and good walking shoes. This is one of the most important archaeological sites in all of Greece and still considered a sacred site. Boats will leave for the island from 9am and roughly every half hour after. The island will close at 3pm. Entrance to the island is free with a student ID.

### Eating in Mykonos

The best place to eat is in Chora. You can eat right on the water in what is called "Little Venice". This area is full of sea front restaurants. Some of these restaurants are good while others can be quite lousy. An easy way to determine where to eat is to see where it is the most crowded. The most crowded restaurants are usually the better ones. You can use this to you advantage. If it isn't all that crowded and you walk up and down looking at the menus you can get the restaurants to offer you freebies to eat there. One restaurant offered free glasses of wine and a free dessert for eating at their restaurant. One restaurant I would recommend is the restaurant that is located on the beach at Agios Stefanos. The price of dinner can range from 8€ - 20€. For lunch I would recommend exploring the winding streets of Chora and enjoying some delicious gyros.

### Transportation in Mykonos

If you want freedom of transportation you need to rent a car or a 4 wheeler. A 4 wheeler can be rented around 15€ and a car from around 20€ and up. You must be 23 or older to rent a car. In the main town of Chora there is also a fairly steady stream of Taxis that leave from next to the water. The taxis will queue up here and they will take you to wherever you need to go on the island. To go from this spot

to above the Agios Stefanos beach, about 2-3 miles, only cost around 5€. If you are going to and from dinner using the taxi system is not very expensive and is quick and reliable.

### Getting from the Port in Athens to the Airport

When you arrive back in Athens there is the chance that you could not arrive at the port you originally departed from of Piraeus. I do not believe that the metro connects to this port. If you need to get from this port, which I believe starts with a K, to the airport there is a bus that will take you to the airport for around 6€. The schedule of this bus can be found at the small bus station directly across from where you leave the ferry. If pressed for time you can take a taxi from here. When ferries arrive there will be a large line of queued taxis. From this spot it will take about an hour to an hour and fifteen minutes to get to the airport. Depending on traffic it will cost around 50€ to take a taxi. Pressed for time I took a taxi from this port and hitting every light red it cost about 55€ and took around 1h15m. If you are pressed for your flight let your driver know what time your flight is and you are concerned about making your flight. Once on the main highway I believe my driver was going about 130mph at one point, that is what you call service.

If you arrive at the Piraeus port it is very easy to get to the airport. You can take the X96 express bus to the airport for around 5€. You can also get on the metro line 1 and take it to the airport for around 8€. A taxi ride from here would be fairly expensive.

## Italy

### Traveling in Italy

There are several places in Italy that are of interest to visit. As with many European countries Italy has a well developed train system connecting all the major towns. I would highly recommend using the train system in Italy to travel. The trains in Italy are relatively inexpensive compared to other countries. There are fast trains and slow trains which will affect travel times and prices. Getting from Rome to Venice can cost as little as 20-25€ if time is not an issue by taking the slow train. Any city that is within 2-3 hours slow train ride from your current city can be traveled to for around 20€ most times of the year. In many countries, such as France, you are better off to buy your tickets in advance as prices will increase closer to the date of travel. However I did not find this to be true in Italy. When traveling from Rome to other cities I found it very easy to purchase tickets the day of travel for the same price that I had seen months earlier online. If traveling in Italy I would highly recommend taking advantage of the train system which can be found at [trenitalia.com](http://trenitalia.com).

### Transportation in Venice

Venice is on a lagoon and uses a system of canals. There are water taxis and water buses. Water taxis are very expensive and can cost 55€ on way. The water bus system is the way to go, however it is still rather expensive. The water bus costs 6.50€ one direction and you can buy cards that are good in 12 hour intervals. I would recommend buying a one way ticket when you want to go to your lodgings the first time if it is far from your entry point into the island. Whenever you do your main visiting to sites and museums and places of interests it is good to buy a card for time period. 12 hours of unlimited travel costs 16€, 24 hours costs 18€, and 36 hours costs 23€. The only water bus you really need to take is that on the grand canal. If you take it to the end and get on a new one you can get a good seat in the

front for a trip down the grand canal to see the buildings. If in Venice for a short time I would recommend buying the 24 hour pass for 2 euro extra if you are leaving the day after doing your main travel. This will save you about 5 euro by not having to buy a one way pass to leave.

The main way to get around in Venice is walking. There are three bridges that will allow you to cross the main bridge. Remember the sights around where you are staying as you will get lost many times walking around Venice. The streets go forever, are small, and criss-cross. Make sure to have a map in case you get too lost.

### Money in Venice

If you want to have cash on you in Venice make sure to get it before you begin exploring the city. One of the great phenomenon in Venice is finding a working ATM. While it is difficult to find an ATM many times when you do find one it is not in service. You can spend an hour or two searching for a working ATM – important when the place you are staying only accepts cash. The ATM's have a mind of their own. After finding two ATM's early in the day which were not working I walked by them a few hours later and they were in service and working. To avoid having to play musical ATM's in Venice make sure to have what cash you think you might need here on you. Many ATM's in Venice will also place a limit on how much you can take out per day. So if you are going to need a large amount it is wise to have it before you arrive in Venice.

## Croatia

### Traveling to Croatia

Croatia is probably under the radar for most in Europe. It only recently joined the EU and was the site of much conflict in the 1990's. Croatia is one of the most beautiful countries in Europe and is very worthy of a trip. There are two main ways to get to Croatia which are by ferry from Italy and by plane. By plane you can fly into Split or Dubrovnik. These airports are only served at certain times of the year by value airlines such as Ryanair or Easyjet. You can also get to Croatia from several ports on the east coast of Italy. Where you want to get to in Croatia will determine where you want to depart from in Italy. These departure points are Venice, Ancona, Pescara, and Bari. Frequency of the ferries will depend on the season. When I went at the end of April I left from Ancona and arrived in Split. The ferry only traveled between the two cities every 2 days. The main ferry companies you will deal with are Blue line ferries, Venezia Lines, Jadrolinija, and SNAV.

- Ferries from Venice to Croatia:

- >> to Mali Losinj, Piran, Pula, Rovinj, Porec, Rabac (Venezia Lines )

- Ferries from Ancona to Croatia:

- >> to Zadar, Split (Jadrolinija Ferries)

- >> to Split, Vis, Stari Grad/Hvar Island (Blue Line Ferries)

- >> to Split (SNAV Ferries)

- Ferries from Pescara to Croatia:

- >> to Split, Stari Grad/Hvar Island (SNAV Ferries or Jadrolinija Ferries)

- Ferries from Bari to Croatia:  
>> to Dubrovnik (Jadrolinija Ferries)

For a robust breakdown of prices, travel times, and other information on this topic check out this resource <http://www.italylogue.com/planning-a-trip/how-to-get-from-italy-to-croatia-by-ferry.html>.

### Staying in Split, Croatia

When I visited Split I stayed at what was essentially a young couples large apartment they had converted into a place to host guests. This was by Bacvice beach, the only sandy beach near the city center that is considered safe to swim. However they have greatly increased their prices. Try looking at [hostelbookers.com](http://hostelbookers.com) and you can find many places to stay here for 15-20€. You can stay in a former Roman emperor's palace or at another place near the beach. The beach is only a few minute walk from the main area of town.

### Attractions

The main attraction in Split is what was once Diocletian's Palace. The Palace was built by the Roman emperor Diocletian in the early 300's. He saw that many emperors out stayed their welcome and ended up assassinated. He decided to retire and have this fortified palace built where he was born. The palace was vacant for a few centuries until around the 800's. It became fortified in medieval times. The palace was unknown to the western world until the late 1700's. While the palace has changed from modifications it is still one of the best preserved pieces of Roman architecture. You can tour the palace for free as it today has several shops within its walls. The city of Split is built around the palace which is at the center right next to the port.