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Paris: A City That Will Captivate You

By H.A. Brempell

I soaked up the personalities of boutiques as I walked among the streets, I glided along the Seine

River on a luxurious dinner cruise, and I almost fainted when I finally saw the Eiffel Tower in person. I fell in love with a city. I fell in love with Paris, France. I have no doubt that you would, too.

Paris in the summer was most enchanting. There is always a celebration or an event that will perk your interests. From the three-day Paris Country Fair to the Nuits de Feuto, one of the largest fireworks spectacles in the world, these events are sure to please especially if you like the outdoors. Or, if you prefer the indoors, with 140 theatres and show venues, there are major theatrical productions and musicals galore!

What woman could possibly visit Paris without wanting to experience the joy of shopping? I sure didn't as I roamed among different neighborhoods to visit boutiques and cafés. Le Marais district is best to explore many fashion and design boutiques. It's hard to resist making a purchase of some sort along the way! A unique café you'll want to check out is Pomze in the Opéra/Grands Boulevard area, which offers apple-themed cuisine.

I thought the view of some historical landmarks along the Seine River while on a night-time dinner cruise was stunning! The Bateaux Parisiens/Seine Vision cruise is unforgettable. I saw the spectacular night view of Notre-Dame, the Eiffel Tower (nicknamed the "guardian of Paris in golden apparel"), the Musée du Louvre (The Louvre Museum), and more historical landmarks of France.

You absolutely don't want to miss visiting the Eiffel Tower in the day as well. A 59-foot trek up the tower takes you to the top to overlook the city of Paris that will leave you breathless!

During the day, the Louvre Museum was just as delightful. As a former royal palace, it features a large, glass Crystal Pyramid near the front entrance. The museum itself features paintings and artifacts of architecture, history, and archeology of France's rich heritage. The Louvre hosts the famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci, the Mona Lisa. The palace was first opened to the public during the French Revolution.

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In July you don't want to miss the famous bicycling race, Le Tour de France (The Tour of France). Even though Lance Armstrong may not be entering the race again, it is worth experiencing the national identity and pride of France.

But before you're able to experience Paris to its fullest, I strongly recommend not leaving home without planning well in advance. Advanced lodging accommodations are much needed. Booking travel dates ahead of time and your hotel stay will save you hours, if not days of stress headaches while trying to plan the perfect Paris vacation. Since the summer weather in Paris ranges from fairly cool in the day (lower to mid-70s) all the way up to 95 degrees, plan to bring a variety of apparel to keep cool and warm. A few light sweaters, jeans, shorts, and cotton shirts would work best. For the colder evenings (mid- to upper-50s), plan to bring a coat to keep warm. Other essentials to pack before leaving Paris include:

* a digital camera * a small bag to carry a water bottle, maps, paper and pen, and the digital camera * comfortable walking shoes * a light rain jacket (just in case)

Besides the typical items you should bring with you, an absolute consideration must be made when planning to travel overseas; knowing what type of ID you will need while in France is most important. Only a passport is required for entry into France. For stays up to 90 days, a visa will not be needed.

Understanding at least some of the "language of love" is most appreciated by the French. So, taking some beginning French lessons before you leave for Paris would be useful or simply finding a good English-French dictionary may work well to start. Learning some basic phrases helped me around the city or guided me to someone who spoke English. For example, there were several friendly question and greeting phrases I used repeatedly throughout my trip:

* Hello (good day). --> Bonjour. * Good evening. --> Bonsoir. * Excuse me, do you speak English? --> Excusez moi, parlez vous anglais? * Where is -? --> Où est - * In what direction do I have to go? --> Dans quel sens dois-je aller? * How much is it? --> Combien est-ce? * No, I don't understand. --> No, je ne comprends pas. * Thank you. --> Merci. * Bye. --> Au Revoir

And when you do get to Paris, it's best to do three things to make your trip most enjoyable. First, knowing that Paris is partitioned by districts, which are located on the street signs, will make your travel easier. Second, for a very low price, purchase what's called a "Paris City Passport" from the Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau which includes over 45 museum, attraction, excursion, and shopping discounts and also includes a map of all Paris districts. Third, knowing a little about all transportation options would be ideal, usually the Metro bus or taxi are good choices. Knowing what district your hotel is in also helps. And don't forget to use your new French skills!

To endure the everlasting spirit of Paris is not difficult. Once I visited Paris, I never knew such beauty could exist in a thrilling European adventure like this. I have not left the memories behind me and I have not forgotten the experience of falling in love with a city. Paris will continue to fascinate you too, even after you've said, "au revoir!"

This article was written by H.A. Brempell sponsored by

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City Breaks In Paris

By Steven Cronin

Paris is simply the city that has it all. From its birth on the banks of the Seine in 52 BC as Julius Caesar continued his conquest of Europe, the City of Light has always commanded a captive audience.

Paris is synonymous with iconic landmarks. There's nothing quite like watching the Eiffel Tower light up on a beautiful moonlit night, reaching out to the stars and beyond.

Many first time travellers to Paris arrive via the rather underwhelming Eurostar train terminal. But don't let first impressions deter you. The French charm is soon apparent upon the city streets.

But be careful navigating the roads. Parisian drivers are notoriously erratic and have been known to create some wonderful scenes of mayhem.

Perhaps the safest option is to travel on the very efficient Metro. The underground rail network is one of the best in the world. Clean and safe, the whole city becomes instantly accessible at a very reasonable price.

Many first timers make a beeline for the Louvre and Leonardo da Vinci's enigmatic Mona Lisa. Rebuilt in its unique pyramid structure, the Louvre is conceivably the world's best art gallery and instantly recognisable.

Café culture is the epitome of Paris. Philosophers and intellectuals are sat on every corner and side street, drinking their coffee and debating current affairs. Following the war with Iraq, anti-American feelings are commonplace in the capital. However, these should not hinder anyone's plans to visit the city. The French are generally very accommodating.

Shoppers in Paris are in their element. Huge department stores such as La Samaritaine and Galeries Lafayette house every conceivable household brand, providing a wealth of opportunity to punish your credit card.

Cathedrale de Notre Dame de Paris and Chateau de Versailles are always high on the list of must-sees. In fact it's impossible to see everything Paris has to offer in a single day. It would take

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several to fully appreciate the essence of Paris, what it is that motivates the city and its people.

Many have sought refuge in Parisian culture. Great names such as Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dali found it impossible to ignore the lure of this great city. Ernest Hemingway was another enticed by its magnetism.

But ultimately, to experience for yourself the world's number one tourist destination is a memory to take with you forever.

Steven Cronin owns the City Breaks website featuring city break special offers from luxury hotels to budget accommodations. For more information please visit

<http://www.sargas.co.uk>

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