

FREE DESTINATION GUIDE

PARIS

France



The City of Light, done right: icons, neighborhoods, and coffee on a real schedule.

SAFETY: US State Dept: Level 2

Travelling with ActorTonyB & Nala The Shih Tzu

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Top Sights

- **Eiffel Tower.** Book summit tickets online weeks ahead, then picnic on the Champ de Mars at sunset.
- **Louvre Museum.** Enter through the Carrousel entrance, go early, and pick two wings instead of trying it all.
- **Notre Dame Cathedral.** Reopened and shining again; reserve a free entry slot online and walk the Ile de la Cite after.
- **Sacre-Coeur and Montmartre.** Climb at golden hour for the best skyline in Paris, then wander the artists' square.
- **Arc de Triomphe and Champs-Elysees.** Climb the Arc at dusk and watch the avenue light up below you.
- **Seine River Cruise.** A one hour evening cruise is the easiest first night orientation in the city.
- **Musee d'Orsay.** Impressionist masterpieces in a gorgeous old rail station, smaller and calmer than the Louvre.
- **Palace of Versailles.** An easy RER day trip; rent a bike to cover the gardens like a local.

Local Tips

- Buy timed entry tickets for major museums online before you fly; same day lines can run two hours.
- The Metro is fast and cheap. A phone based Navigo pass beats paper tickets every time.
- Start every interaction with bonjour. It is not optional politeness in Paris, it is the key that opens doors.
- Many museums are free on the first Sunday of the month; plan a museum heavy day around it.
- Keep phones and wallets zipped near big sights and on crowded Metro lines; pickpockets work the tourist circuit.
- Dinner runs late, usually 7:30 pm or later. Aperitif hour around 6 pm is the local warm up.
- Tap water is safe and restaurants serve it free if you ask for une carafe d'eau.

Customs & Etiquette

Do

- Greet shopkeepers with *bonjour* when you walk in and *au revoir* when you leave.
- Keep your voice low in churches, museums, and on public transport.
- Dress a notch smarter than you think; Parisians notice effort.
- Learn five French words and use them; the effort is warmly received.

Please Don't

- Do not flag a waiter down by snapping or waving; eye contact and a quiet *excusez-moi* works.
- Do not expect ice in drinks or free refills; both are rare in France.
- Do not eat a full picnic on the Metro; snacking is fine in parks, not underground.
- Do not assume everyone speaks English; ask politely first: *parlez-vous anglais?*

Things to Know Before You Go

Currency. Euro (EUR). Cards are accepted nearly everywhere; keep a few coins for small cafes and markets.

Language. French. English is common in hotels and major sights, less so in small neighborhoods.

Best time to visit. April to June and September to October: mild weather, thinner crowds, and fair prices.

Getting around. Metro and RER trains cover the whole city. Walk between sights in the center; use city bikes for the river paths.

Five phrases that open doors

Bonjour	Hello / good day
Merci	Thank you
S'il vous plait	Please
Excusez-moi	Excuse me
Où sont les toilettes?	Where is the restroom?

What to Bring

- A compact umbrella and a warm layer in every season; Paris weather turns fast.
- Comfortable walking shoes you have already broken in; expect 15,000 steps a day on cobblestones.
- A crossbody bag with zips for the Metro and museum crowds.
- A European plug adapter (Type C or E) and a small power bank for maps and tickets.
- One smart outfit: Paris restaurants and theaters still dress up a little.
- Copies of museum reservations on your phone, screenshotted in case data drops.

What to Expect

Weather: mild but moody. Winters are gray and near 40 F, summers warm with long evenings and the odd heat wave; many buildings have no air conditioning.

Pace: unhurried. Cafes will never rush you out, shops in smaller neighborhoods close for lunch, and August sees family businesses shut for holidays.

Costs in practice: a coffee at the bar costs half what it costs seated. Museum passes pay off fast if you plan two sights a day.

How tourists are received: warmly, especially when you open with *bonjour* and try a few words. Paris rewards effort more than almost anywhere.

What NOT to Bring

- Large amounts of cash; cards rule Paris, and cash makes you a pickpocket target.
- Oversized suitcases; Metro stairs, small elevators, and fifth floor walk ups will punish them.
- Weapons of any kind, including pepper spray, which is restricted in France and can be confiscated.
- Your home country's plug strips without a voltage check; most modern chargers are dual voltage, hair dryers often are not.

Safety Rating

US State Dept advisory level: Level 2: Exercise Increased Caution

France sits at Level 2 on the US State Department scale, mainly due to terrorism risk at major public venues. Day to day, Paris feels like any big European capital: the realistic risks are pickpocketing and bag snatching around famous sights and busy stations, not violent crime.

Three practical safety moves

- Wear bags crossbody and zipped in crowds, especially at the Eiffel Tower, Sacre-Coeur steps, and Gare du Nord.
- Stay alert at large events and demonstrations; give protest marches a wide berth and follow local news.
- Enroll in the free STEP program at step.state.gov so the US embassy can reach you in an emergency.

Advisory levels change. Check the current rating for your destination at travel.state.gov before you book and again before you fly. Summary reflects the advisory in effect in October 2026.

Budget Snapshot

Rough per person daily ranges in US dollars, including lodging, food, local transport, and activities. Airfare not included. Treat these as planning estimates, not quotes.

Tier	Per day (USD)	What it looks like
Budget traveler	\$100 to \$150 per day	Hostel or small hotel, Metro pass, bakery breakfasts, one paid sight a day.
Mid range	\$200 to \$300 per day	Boutique hotel in a central arrondissement, bistros, museum passes, a river cruise.
Comfort	\$400 plus per day	Four star hotel, guided tours, fine dining, and a Versailles day with a driver.

Ready to Go?

You have the sights, the tips, the customs, and the budget. Now put dates on it. Compare flights, stays, cars, and activities for Paris in one place, with live prices and traveler reviews.

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