

PARIS: GREAT ITINERARIES

Paris is a treasure of neighborhoods and history, and a visit to this glorious city is never quite as simple as a quick look at a few landmarks. These one-day itineraries are mix and match: follow the ones that intrigue you—and leave yourself time to just walk and explore.

Monumental Paris

Begin your day at the Trocadéro métro, where you can get the best views of the Tour Eiffel from the esplanade of the Palais de Chaillot. If you absolutely must ride to the top, now is the best time to get in line. Otherwise, get a Seine-side view of the city's other noteworthy monuments from the Bateaux Parisiens, moored below the Pont d'Iéna. Hour-long cruises loop around the Ile de la Cité, with multilingual commentary on the sights along the way. Afterward you can take the RER to the Musée d'Orsay for lunch in the museum's Belle Époque dining room before tackling the late-19th-century works of art. Then it's a short walk to the imposing Hôtel des Invalides, the French military museum built as a retirement home for wounded soldiers under Louis XIV. The emperor Napoléon Bonaparte rests beneath the golden dome. If the weather's nice, have tea next door in the sculpture gardens of the Musée Rodin (entrance to the gardens €1). If your feet are still happy, cross the gilded Pont Alexandre III to the Champs-Élysées, passing the Belle Époque art palaces known as the Grand et Petit Palais. You can take Bus 73 from the Assemblée Nationale across the bridge to the Place de la Concorde and all the way up the Avenue des Champs-Élysées to the Arc de Triomphe. Open until 11 PM, its panoramic viewing platform is ideal for admiring the City of Light.

Alternative: Instead of the traditional Seine cruise, try the Batobus, which allows you to hop on and hop off throughout the day with one ticket. The seven Batobus ports include the Eiffel Tower, Notre-Dame, Hôtel de Ville, Louvre Museum, and Musée d'Orsay. Note that there's no commentary on these tours.

Old Paris

Start at the Pont Neuf for excellent views off the western tip of the Ile de la Cité, then explore the island's magnificent architectural heritage, including the Conciergerie, Sainte-Chapelle, and Notre-Dame. The brave can climb the corkscrew staircase to the towers for a gargoyle's-eye view of the city. Then detour to the neighboring Ile St-Louis for lunch before heading into the medieval labyrinth of the Quartier Latin: its most valuable treasures are preserved in the Cluny Musée National du Moyen-Age, including the reconstructed ruins of 2nd-century Gallo-Roman steam baths. At the summit of the hill above the Sorbonne university is the imposing Panthéon, a monument (and mausoleum) of French heroes. Don't miss the exquisite Eglise St-Etienne-du-Mont next door, where the relics of the city's patron Saint Geneviève are displayed. Follow the Rue Descartes to the Rue Mouffetard for a *café crème* on one of the oldest market streets in Paris. If the sun's still shining, visit the Gallo-Roman Arènes de Lutèce.

Alternative: A different look at the Quartier Latin (Old Paris) can include a visit to the sleek Institut du Monde Arabe, then a relaxing afternoon at the authentic steam baths and tearoom of the nearby Mosquée de Paris.

Royal Paris

Begin at the Place de la Concorde, where an Egyptian obelisk replaces the guillotine where Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette met their bloody fate during the French Revolution, then escape the traffic in the formal Jardin des Tuileries, which once belonged to the 16th-century Tuileries Palace, destroyed during the Paris Commune of 1871. Pass through the small Arc du Carrousel to the modern glass pyramid that serves as the main entrance to the Louvre, the world's grandest museum, once a 12th-century fortress. When you've built up an appetite, cross the street to the peaceful gardens of the Palais Royal for lunch at a café beneath the stone arcades. From here take métro Line 1 to station St-Paul. To the south you can find the Hôtel de Sens, home to King Henry IV's feisty ex-wife Queen Marguerite, and one of the few surviving examples of late-medieval architecture. Around the corner on Rue Charlemagne is a preserved section of the city's 12th-century fortifications built by King Philippe-Augustus. Cross the busy Rue St-Antoine to Le Marais and enter the Hôtel de Sully, a fine example of the elegant private mansions built here by aristocrats in the early 17th century. Pass through the gardens to the doorway on the right, which leads to the lovely symmetrical town houses of the Place des Vosges, designed by King Henry IV. Many of the old aristocratic mansions in Le Marais have been turned into museums, including the Musée Carnavalet and the Musée Picasso.

Power-Shopping Paris

Get an early start to avoid crowds at Au Printemps and Galeries-Lafayette, two of the city's grandest historic department stores conveniently side by side behind the Opéra Garnier. Refuel at the Place de la Madeleine, where gourmet food boutiques such as Hédiard and Fauchon offer light deli foods for shoppers on the move. If the luxury boutiques on the Rue Royale aren't rich enough for you, head down the Rue du Faubourg St-Honoré and the Avenue Montaigne (via Avenue Matignon), where the exclusive couture houses of Chanel, Dior, Hermès, and Yves St-Laurent hold court.

Alternative: For a more genteel shopping experience, head to the Left Bank's chic Bon Marché department store, then work your way through the fashion and home decor boutiques around the Eglise St-Sulpice and St-Germain-des-Prés. Shops get less expensive between métro Odéon and the Quartier Latin.