

PARIS: TOP ATTRACTIONS

Eiffel Tower

Originally built as a temporary exhibition for the 1889 World's Fair, today there's no other monument that symbolizes Paris better than Gustave Eiffel's world-famous Iron Lady. It's breathtaking, whether you see it sparkling from your hotel window after dark or join the millions of annual visitors to brave the glass elevator trip to the top.

Notre-Dame

It took almost 200 years to finish this 12th-century Gothic masterpiece immortalized by Victor Hugo and his fictional hunchback. Climb the spiral staircase of the bell towers for a close-up gander at the gargoyles, or have a peek at relics such as the Crown of Thorns in the cathedral treasury.

Jardin du Luxembourg

This is one of the prime leisure spots on the Left Bank for urban-weary Parisians. Relax in a reclining park chair with a picnic lunch or a book, watch a game of *boules* while the kids enjoy a marionette show, or visit an exhibition at the Musée Luxembourg in a wing of the 17th century Palais de Luxembourg, which is now home to the Paris Senate.

Jardin des Tuileries

The 17th-century formal French landscape of these gardens behind the Louvre is punctuated by contemporary sculptures, a café, and two noteworthy museums: the Musée du Jeu de Paume and the Musée de l'Orangerie. In summer there's a small amusement park and Ferris wheel.

Arc de Triomphe

The 164-foot-tall Arc de Triomphe has served as the backdrop to official military parades since its completion in 1836. Use the underground passageway to reach the monument, where you can visit the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier beneath the arch or climb the stairs for amazing panoramic views of the city.

Musée d'Orsay

After a stunted lifespan as a train station constructed for the 1900 World's Fair, this beautiful Belle Époque building is filled with Art Nouveau objects, Impressionist paintings, vintage photography, and realist sculptures. Don't miss the scale model of the Opéra Garnier or the views of the Seine from the grand ballroom now housing the museum's restaurant.

Opéra Garnier

Opulent, stunning, and magnificently over-the-top, Charles Garnier's opera house is one of the outstanding jewels of the Second Empire. Its illustrious marble staircase and ruby-red box seats have been featured in films from *Dangerous Liaisons* to *Marie-Antoinette*, and its backstage corridors are famously haunted by the Phantom of the Opera.

Centre Pompidou

The Pompidou Centre's groundbreaking "inside-out" design is still visually shocking (it opened in 1977) this is also the top destination for modern-art lovers in Paris.

Sacré-Coeur

This wedding-cake white basilica dominates Montmartre's hilltop. Most visitors are content with the views overlooking the city from the basilica stairs, but ambitious sight seekers can climb to the bell tower for an even higher vantage point.

Musée du Louvre

The grandest museum in the world was just a humble fortress in the 12th century, but grew in size and prestige as a sumptuous royal palace until the French Revolution gave it a new lease on life as home to the Republic's art collection. Don't miss the big three—*Mona Lisa*, *Winged Victory*, and *Venus de Milo*.