

Paris Center and its Sights

A most pleasant way to examine the Paris center is sailing on the Batobus boat down the Seine to see major sights along and enjoy city landscapes from the river. The boat sails the way round with 8 stops after every 15-30 min from early February to early January.

You can start the tour from the Bourdonnais quay with the nearby Eiffel Tower (la Tour Eiffel) as France's symbol and Ecole Militaire opposite the Trocadero square on the other bank. These places are accessible by subway or bus. If you stay outside Paris, you can also reach the Eiffel Tower by the RER line.

The 324-m high Eiffel Tower was erected on Champ de Mars opposite the Iena bridge across the Seine. It served as a temporary structure and entrance arch for Exposition Universelle, the World Fair in 1889. For over 40 years it had been the world's highest structure until 1930 when excelled by New York City's Chrysler Building.

The Military School (Ecole Militaire) was founded by Louis XV in 1750, initiated by Joseph Paris (known as Duverney) and supported by Madame de Pompadour, for military cadets from poor families. In 1784 Napoleon Bonaparte studied there graduating in 1 year instead of 2.

Palais de Chaillot was built up to the 1937 World Fair instead of former Palais du Trocadero. The palace is 2 huge pavilions stretching out in arcs with a platform between. It sides with the Trocadero garden-park complex with stairs and Paris' biggest fountains. Palais de Chaillot hosts some museums - the Museum of Man, the Marine Museum and the Museum of French Monuments.

Mooring to the Solferino quay, you can visit Musee d'Orsay - a museum of fine and applied arts and the world's largest collection of the 1848-1914 European painting and sculpture.

At the Malaquais quay you'll visit St-Germain-des-Pres, a Benedictine abbey (the oldest in Paris) and Roman architectural monument. The St-Germain-des-Pres church is the city's oldest. Its chapels and nave date back to the 11th-12th centuries.

Landed at the Montebello quay, you'll see Notre-Dame de Paris. The cathedral is by right considered Paris' heart combining Roman style echoes with Gothic style innovations. The quay features a mini-market with rare literature, old posters and pictures.

At the Saint-Bernard quay (the 2nd terminal) you can walk round a plant garden, Jardin des Plantes. The Botanic Garden also includes the Bagatelle park in the Boulogne forest, its Auteuil hothouses, a flower park in the Vincennes forest and its Breuil school arboretum.

At the route terminal the [Batobus boat](#) turns back to stop first at the L'Hotel de Ville quay near the Hotel de Ville palace built in 1874-1882. The palace stands on Place de Greve, a former medieval square and now the Paris City Hall.

The Louvre quay lets you inside one of the world's most famous and biggest museums with the same name, Musee du Louvre. Its collection covers antiquity to 1848, West Europe to Iran, Greece, Egypt and the Middle East.

The last stop but one is the Champs-Elysees embankment with Pont Alexandre III, one of Paris' most beautiful bridges. Grand Palais (the Great Palace of Fine Arts) nearby was erected in 1897 for the World Fair of April 15 - November 12, 1900 instead of the former Industry Palace. Grand Palais is a major cultural and exhibition center.

Back at the starting point, you'll face the Eiffel Tower again. Enjoy it at night, lit by thousands of lamps and whose top-positioned lighthouse shines 80 km out.

Not to buy tickets at every stop, you can purchase a 1, 2 or 5-day pass for 12, 16 and 19 Euro correspondingly. When staying in Paris for long, buy a yearly pass for just 55 Euro. With a city transport pass (Carte Etudiant, Imagine R, Carte Orange, Integrale, Emeraude or Amethyste), you can buy a special 33-% off pass.

To visit museums and travel round the city, use Paris Visite Card, a [city and suburban pass](#) for 1, 2, 3 or 5 days. Depending on the type, it covers zones 1-3 (Paris with suburbs for 9-28 Euro) or 1-6 (Ile-de-France for 18-48 Euro). Paris Visite Card also provides a discount to many museums, Batobus (together with other passes), the Montmartre mini-train and L'open Tour tourist buses.

About the Author

To put aside Paris sightseeing and have a snack, Irwin suggests [Paris restaurants](#) to any taste and budget.

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