



FRANCE

Paris: first-timers survival guide

A week in Paris — neighborhoods, food, metro, the tourist traps to skip, and the little things that make the trip feel French.

Prepared by Demo Advisor · April 20, 2026

ADVISOR TIP

Demo content — illustrative only. This is a showcase of Compass features, not travel advice. Verify anything you'd actually act on.

Paris rewards people who slow down. It's not a checklist city — it's a neighborhood city. Pick two or three arrondissements to linger in, eat three-hour lunches, and don't try to see the Louvre AND Versailles AND Notre-Dame in one day.

At a glance

WEATHER

BEST TIME

May–June or
September–
October

AVG HIGH

72°F (22°C)
summer

AVG LOW

40°F (4°C) winter

RAINY SEASON

Wet October–
March

The neighborhoods

Le Marais (3rd/4th)

Cobblestones, falafel at L'As du Fallafel, boutique shopping, the Picasso museum. Where you want to base yourself if you want Paris-on-foot.

Saint-Germain (6th)

Literary cafés (Les Deux Magots), Luxembourg Gardens, the serious food streets around Rue de Buci. Classic and slightly older-skewing.

Montmartre (18th)

Sacré-Cœur, painters, steep staircases, the Amélie café. Charming but touristy — go early morning before the tour groups arrive.

Bastille / 11th

Where Parisians actually go out. Natural wine bars, Sunday market at Marché d'Aligre, great pizza and neo-bistros.

Food worth building a day around

Splurge

Le Comptoir du Relais

Mid-range

Breizh Café

Quick + local

Du Pain et des Idées

Yves Camdeborde's bistro. Book a month out for dinner; walk up for lunch.

Best crêpes in the city. Buckwheat galettes with salted butter caramel.

Bakery. Get there before 11am or the escargot pistache is gone.

Getting around

1. Buy a Navigo Easy card at any metro station — one card, tap-and-go, works on metro, bus, and RER trains within zones 1–2.
2. Load 10 rides (un carnet) for around €17 — saves 20% vs. single tickets.
3. Download the RATP or Citymapper app for live connections. Paris metro is fast but line closures happen constantly.
4. Don't drive. Parking is a nightmare and traffic is slower than the metro.

What to pack

PACKING LIST

- ☐ Broken-in walking shoes (you'll log 10–15k steps a day)
- ☐ Layers — mornings are cool even in July
- ☐ Small bag or crossbody (pickpocketing in metro + near tourist sites)
- ☐ A real scarf (Parisians aren't kidding about scarves)
- ☐ Adapter for Type E plugs
- ☐ Cash for smaller cafés that cap cards below €15

Tipping

Service is included by French law (service compris). Tipping is for exceptional service, not obligation:

TIPPING GUIDE

Bistro / café	€1–2 per person or round up
Nice restaurant	5–10% on top if service was great
Hotel housekeeping	€1–2 per night
Taxi driver	Round up to nearest €
Tour guide	10–15%

FAQ

Do I need to speak French?

No, but start every interaction with "Bonjour" — it's less about the language and more about acknowledging the person before you ask for something. Locals respond dramatically better.

Is the metro safe at night?

Yes, with normal city awareness. Avoid the RER B after midnight and keep your bag in front in crowded cars.

Should I buy the Paris Museum Pass?

Only if you're hitting 4+ museums in 2 days. For most 5-day trips you'll save more by just booking timed entries online.

What about the strikes?

French transit strikes happen. Check ratp.fr the morning of a planned outing; metros usually run on some lines even during strike days.

[Book a free planning call →](#)

Questions we didn't cover? Reply to your booking confirmation — we'd rather over-answer than leave you guessing.

