

To find its rhythms, tread Paris's outer limits

► **PARIS**
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poetry readings, guided tours — and most are free.

I press her for a specific favorite and she shrugs. “Paris has its special rhythm — it takes its time. I love waking up early and having breakfast on the Seine.”

Like a picnic?
“Oh, *non!* You must have your café on a terrace and you must be where the sun will be.”

That said, the idea of Paris on the cheap seems inherently depressing — like missing out on the best stuff. Being frugal is doable but it requires preparation, an open mind, and a willingness to trade the bling for a different kind of authenticity.

“You have to detach yourself from the glitzy image of Paris and move away from tourist attractions where you’re a captive audience,” says guidebook writer Anna Brooke, who has penned everything from “MTV Free” to the upcoming “Paris Free & Dirt Cheap” for Frommer’s.

“As far as capital cities go, Paris is very livable — it’s not just about business,” says Brooke, “and even in the center you can find neighborhoods that cater to the locals.”

Brooke rifles through her bag and — mark of a good guidebook writer — pulls out a handful of restaurant business cards she has discovered on her wanderings. She finds one for the appropriately named Le Bistrot in the ninth arrondissement. “It looks like nothing at all, but you can get wines for 2.50 euros [\$3.50] per glass and lunch for nine euros [\$13],” she says. “You’ve got no frills but local flavor.”

This reminds me of one of my favorite lunch spots, Le Temps des Cerises, where, for \$19, Yves and Michelle serve an ever-improving lunch menu in a picturesque bistro a stone’s throw from the Marais and the Bastille — and I would never have found it without walking past it. Want a perfect little dose of Paris? Go here.

Put simply, eating French — even in France — isn’t cheap. Dinner entrees at places I would recommend rarely dip below \$14-\$17. Lower than that and the bottom drops out almost every time. Factor this into your budget and the rewards can be great.

For fancier fare on a budget, moving up often means moving out of the center. The restaurants Parisians are talking about and going to in droves are the ones where they can eat well without — as they might say — costing the skin from their rear ends.

The gastro bistro trend of young, talented, and often classically-trained chefs who have set up in the city’s outer arrondissements and offer stellar meals at value-conscious prices shows no signs of abating. A prix-fixe dinner at somewhere north of \$45 plus wine is a good chunk of change but also an incredible val-

If you go . . .

Where to stay

Mama Shelter
011-33-1-43-48-48-48
www.mamashelter.com

Hotel Amour
011-33-1-48-78-31-80
www.hotelamourparis.fr

Aviatic
011-33-1-53-63-25-50

Where to picnic

The quays and bridges of Paris offer unbelievable city views. The Champs de Mars offers a front-row seat to the Eiffel Tower. The canals give a glimpse of residential life.

Where to find Sandy McKeen

Marché Président Wilson

Metro: Alma-Marceau, léna

Wednesday and Saturday 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

Where to eat

Le Temps des Cerises

011-33-01-42-72-08-63y

Lunch only. Entrees \$14-\$21

and a prix-fixe at \$19.

L’Escargot

011-33-1-42-06-03-96

Dinner only. Main dishes from \$17-\$28.

Au Vieux Chêne

011-33-1-43-71-67-69

Closed Saturday and Sunday.

Lunch prix-fixe for \$19; entrees (lunch and dinner) \$28-\$34.

Itinéraires

011-3-6-5-6-53

Prix fixe only, lunch \$37-\$51,

dinner \$51.

Le Comptoir du Relais

011-33-1-44-27-07-97

Reserve way ahead or show up

early and eat on the heated

terrace. Lunch and dinner \$14-

\$43. In September, the \$71

knock-your-socks-off prix-fixe

menu resumes.



ue for what you get.

Some favorites? Belleville’s L’Escargot serves my favorite duck confit in town — crunchy on the outside, melting inside, and served with a tower of truffle oil-infused mashed potatoes and a salad with a zingy vinaigrette to cut through it all. Farther east, in the gastronomic heaven known as the 11th arrondissement, try Au Vieux Chêne where chef Stéphane Chevassus consistently blows me away, particularly with

PICK YOUR SPOTS

Stroll through Parisian markets, bistros, and picnic areas in a gallery at www.boston.com/travel.

vegetables like butter-braised cabbage and pumpkin velouté.

One new dining trend is that some favorites are moving into the city center, following the lead of gastro-bistro godfather Yves Camdeborde, whose \$71 prix fixe at Le Comptoir should be on everyone’s list (think deep stews crowned with wonderfully un-mushy veggies and an organic pink sparkling Bugey Cerdon wine that will remove doubts that this sort of thing can be done well). Most notably Sylvain Sendra has moved from Le Temps au Temps on the rue Paul Bert in the 11th (where he wowed me with barely-marinated mackerel) to Itinéraires in the 5th, and American Daniel Rose is in the process of moving Spring (lamb three ways, pears belle Helene) from the 9th to a spot near the Louvre.

These places are literally (and often obscurely) all over the map — seek them out before you come and, most importantly, reserve way ahead.

The other major dining trend? Picnics. Dismissed with an ultra-Parisian pff! up until a few years ago, dining in the city’s parks and on the banks of its canals and river is now in. Find a market, grab some cheese, charcuterie, bread, and wine and you’re in business.

Picnics are also a perfect excuse to go to the market and get something more than a fruit cup, but knowing which stands are the best values isn’t easy.

“Capital cities cost a fortune and your eye naturally falls on the prettiest and most expensive things first,” says Sandy McKeen, who runs La Bergerie du Mesnil farm in Normandy and sells his products at Parisian market stands three days a week. “It’s not easy to find the bargains.”

There are, however, ways to shop smart. “Come early in the morning and compare prices,” he says. “If you come later when the market is crowded, you’ll be here forever.”

Also bear in mind that despite the utility of going to a supermarket, it’s not necessarily cheaper. It’s common to find plastic bags of supermarket industrial cheese at the same price as their artisan equivalent at the cheesemonger.

Eventually, you’ll need to sleep and again, getting out of the center helps get you into the best rooms for the buck. Design fans will flip for the Philippe Starck-designed Mama Shelter, a modern oasis that proudly sticks out like a sore thumb in the heart of the residential 20th arrondissement. Specials start at \$122 a night and the city’s bar/restaurant of the moment is on the ground floor. There’s also Hotel Amour just off the beautiful Rue des Martyrs in the ninth, with its artist-designed rooms, playfully



PHOTOS BY JOE RAY/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

At L’Escargot in the Belleville neighborhood of the 19th arrondissement, chef Fred Valade holds sway. The Pont des Arts (below) provides a lively picnic spot near the Institut de France. Chef Yves Camdeborde (left) prepares a pair of steaks at his restaurant, Le Comptoir du Relais.

erotic motifs, and prices that — starting at around \$142 along with ever-changing special offers — can be as soft as the pillows.

If you’re looking for something more classic and central, try the Aviatic on the Rue Vaugirard, which not only has prices starting at \$170 for a double, but also throws in amenities like a free “apéro,” or aperitif, a few days a week.

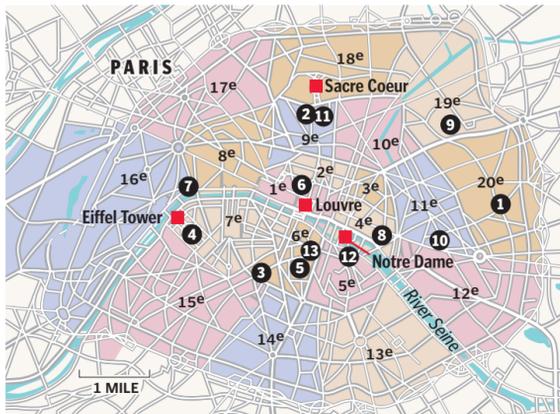
Regardless, don’t be afraid to bargain. “If there’s not a discount on the particular date you’re looking for, you should ask for one,” says Brooke, who worked in hotel PR in a former life. “It’s always worth asking if they can do better.”

It’s also worth looking into renting or exchanging an apartment, particularly for longer stays. Some apartments rent by the night — you can swing a studio for under a hundred bucks, less if you stay longer — and get as big and fancy as you want. Sites like vrbo.com, craigslist, vacationinparis.com, and rentparis.com can involve a leap of faith (make sure you check the scam warnings, vet the listing, and, if possible, talk to the owner), but the rewards can be great — particularly the economy and relaxation of having your own kitchen and dining room.

Following Brame’s advice, I wake early the morning after I meet her, find a cafe seat in the sun, and watch the city come to life around me. It’s been years since I’ve slowed down to watch, and as the city wakes, I see it with new eyes. There’s the relaxed talk of people still oblivious to the city’s rush; the perfect, flaky croissant; and the city at my feet.

This is the city I love.

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- 1 Mama Shelter
109, Rue de Bagnolet
- 2 Hotel Amour
8, Rue de Navarin
- 3 Aviatic
105, Rue de Vaugirard
- 4 Champs de Mars
- 5 Luxembourg Gardens
- 6 Palais Royal garden
- 7 Marché Président Wilson
Av. du Président Wilson between Rue Debrousse and Place d’Iéna
- 8 Le Temps des Cerises
31, Rue Cersaie
- 9 L’Escargot
50, Rue de La Villette
- 10 Au Vieux Chêne
7, Rue Dahomey
- 11 Spring
28, Rue de La Tour d’Auvergne
- 12 Itinéraires
5, Rue Pontoise
- 13 Le Comptoir du Relais
9, Carrefour de l’Odéon

NOTE: e = arrondissement
SOURCE: Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau

DAVID BUTLER/GLOBE STAFF



Can you relate? Museum mines the experience

► **WOODSTOCK**
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bathrooms that plagued the original festival. If anything, the new complex might be too sanitized, but it truly is spectacular. “For baby boomers, this is their youth,” says museum director Wade Lawrence. “But all genders and ages find something to relate to here.”

Wisely, the owner of the property — local native Alan Gerry, who founded Cablevision Industries and sold it to Time-Warner for \$2.7 billion in 1996 — has built on top of the hill and down the other side from the Woodstock stage, leaving those grounds free for people to stare in wonderment toward a gravel patch that marks where Joplin and Hendrix shook the world. “This is a national monument. I’m so glad they didn’t build on this part,” says Thomas Reed, a recent visitor, who wrote a college research paper on Woodstock while at Virginia Tech.

The first stop by the entrance is the museum, a copper-roofed, rotunda-shaped building with an intimate outdoor cafe. I’ve been to many music museums and this one qualifies as world class. It houses 330 photos and multiple video rooms spiced by a 132-seat theater showing Woodstock footage with split-screen edits of recent interviews with original performers such as Carlos Santana, Joe Cocker, and Phil Lesh, to younger acts like Vermont’s



A 15,000-seat amphitheater was built near the spot where performers entertained more than a half-million fans in August 1969.

Grace Potter, who rhapsodizes about Joplin’s influence. But the most compelling video is in a mini-IMAX-like room with 50-foot-tall screens and another overhead that enable you to feel a panorama of the whole experience, right down to the clouds and rain moving in during the show. There are some beanbag chairs in the middle of the room — and young people, especially, flopped on them and soaked up the video immersion.

More clips are shown in a psychedelic, painted hippie bus patterned after the bus of the Merry Pranksters, who were at the festival. There’s also a video booth where you can share personal stories (or hear them) and a touch-screen computer that takes you to all the key sites of

BACK TO THE GARDEN

Take a (non-psychedelic) trip back to Summer 1969 at www.boston.com/travel.

the festival — the stage, campgrounds, Hog Farm food areas, and the woods. The museum is very high-tech — just the opposite of Woodstock — and takes two to three hours to go through its entirety.

The museum’s artifacts include everything from Hog Farmer Wavy Gravy’s jumpsuit to “Food for Love” tickets, Woodstock brochures, and a keyboard from the group Sha Na Na. (Sorry, no Hendrix guitars.) The artifact section could have been better, but it is compensated by the video installations and the historical context in which the festi-



BETHEL WOODS CENTER FOR THE ARTS; DANIEL WOLF/GLOBE STAFF/FILE 1969

val is placed. The first third of the museum depicts the cultural climate of the time with exhibits on civil rights, Vietnam, and a timeline of that decade’s events, from the construction of the Berlin Wall and the Cuban missile crisis to riots at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. No wonder people needed the escape of Woodstock.

As the time for the Dylan concert approached, I walked toward the amphitheater and passed an open-air building where the excellent local Grateful Dead tribute band Nailed Shut warmed up the crowd. There are other concert spaces such as the rock-strewn Terrace (which accommodates 500) and the Event Gallery, which has upcoming shows with Richie Havens (who

opened Woodstock), John Sebastian, and Tom Rush. I kept walking around a looped sidewalk called Bethel Woods Drive (featuring a tent serving local food from Jill’s Kitchen) and then down to the amphitheater.

Unfortunately, the bliss diminished a bit because it’s a fairly generic amphitheater with overpriced beer (\$7 a cup), pricey food (\$8 chicken fingers), and bottled water for \$4. It was a typical shed experience in that regard. Plus, the booking is by the corporate Live Nation and the concessions are run by Aramark, which has done the same at Fenway Park. The original Woodstock spirit of idealistic optimism was not ample here, but the shed’s sound quality was superb (though Dylan put on another of

If you go . . .

The Bethel Woods Center for the Arts

200 Hurd Road

Bethel, N.Y.

866-781-2922

www.bethelwoodscenter.org

Upcoming shows include O.A.R.,

Aug. 12, \$20-\$35; Heroes of

Woodstock, Aug. 15 (Levon

Helm, Country Joe McDonald,

and more perform), \$19.69-

\$69; and Boston Pops with Arlo

Guthrie, Aug. 22, \$10-\$85.

The Museum at Bethel Woods

Summer hours 10 a.m.-7 p.m.

daily. \$13 adults, less for seniors and children.

his mercurial performances), and there was the mesmerizing distraction of beautifully landscaped grounds with bridges, a fountain, and a frog pond, all right on the edge of the woods.

Security was tight near the stage, but fans could frolic down a field at the top of the hill without interference. Looking at the folks gambling about, you sensed the original freedom of Woodstock, so bravo for that. Indeed, despite the corporate compromises that have been made to bring a modern amphitheater to the site, you still sensed the auras of Hendrix and Joplin as you walked around. And you can’t put a price tag on that.

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