

The Best of Paris

Discovering the City of Light and making it your own has always been the most compelling reason to visit Paris. If you're a first-timer, everything, of course, will be new to you. If you've been away for awhile, expect changes: Taxi drivers may no longer correct your fractured French, but address you in English—tantamount to a revolution. More Parisians have a rudimentary knowledge of the language, and France, at least at first glance, seems less xenophobic than in past years. Paris, aware of its role within a united Europe, is an international city. Parisians are attracted to foreign music, videos, and films, especially those from America, even though most French people vehemently disagree with the political dictates emerging from George Bush's Washington.

Though Paris is in flux culturally and socially, it lures travelers for the same reasons as always. You'll still find such classic sights as the Tour Eiffel, Notre-Dame, the Arc de Triomphe, Sacré-Coeur, and all those atmospheric cafes, as well as daringly futuristic projects such as the Grande Arche de La Défense, the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, the Cité de la Musique, and the Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand. Don't forget the parks, gardens, and squares; the Champs-Élysées and other grand boulevards; and the river Seine and its quays. Paris's beauty is still overwhelming, especially at night, when it truly is the City of Light.

1 The Most Unforgettable Travel Experiences

- **Whiling Away an Afternoon in a Parisian Cafe:** The cafes are where passionate meetings of writers, artists, philosophers, thinkers, and revolutionaries once took place—and perhaps still do. Parisians stop by their favorite cafes to meet lovers and friends, to make new ones, or to sit in solitude with a newspaper or book. For our recommendations, see section 6, “The Top Cafes,” in chapter 7, “Where to Dine.”
- **Taking Afternoon Tea à la Française:** Drinking tea in London has its charm, but the Parisian *salon de thé* is unique. Skip the cucumber-and-watercress sandwiches and delve into a luscious dessert like the Mont Blanc, a creamy purée of sweetened chestnuts and meringue. The grandest Parisian tea salon is **Angéline**, 226 rue de Rivoli, 1er (☎ **01-42-60-82-00**; Métro: Tuileries or Concorde; p. 134).
- **Strolling along the Seine:** Such painters as Sisley, Turner, and Monet have fallen under the Seine's spell. On its banks, lovers still walk hand in hand, anglers cast their lines, and *bouquinistes* (secondhand-book dealers) peddle their mix of postcards, 100-year-old pornography, and tattered histories of Indochina. For more details on the sights and moments of Paris, see chapter 8, “Exploring Paris.”

- **Spending a Day at the Races:** Paris boasts eight tracks for horse racing. The most famous and the classiest is **Hippodrome de Longchamp**, in the Bois de Boulogne, the site of the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe and Grand Prix (p. 229). These and other top races are major social events, so you'll have to dress up (buy your outfit on rue du Faubourg St-Honoré). Take the Métro to Porte d'Auteuil and then a bus from there to the track. The racing newspaper *Paris Turf* and weekly entertainment magazines have details about race times.
- **Calling on the Dead:** You don't have to be a ghoul to be thrilled by a visit to Europe's most famous cemetery, **Père-Lachaise** (p. 224). You can pay your respects to the earthly remains of Gertrude Stein and her longtime companion, Alice B. Toklas; Oscar Wilde; Yves Montand and Simone Signoret; Edith Piaf; Isadora Duncan; Abélard and Héloïse; Frédéric Chopin; Marcel Proust; Eugène Delacroix; Jim Morrison; and others. The tomb designs are intriguing and often eerie. Laid out in 1803 on a hill in Ménilmontant, the cemetery offers surprises with its bizarre monuments, unexpected views, and ornate sculpture.
- **Checking Out the Marchés:** A daily Parisian ritual is ambling through one of the open-air markets to buy fresh food—perhaps a properly creamy Camembert or a pumpkin-gold cantaloupe—to be eaten before sundown. Our favorite market is on rue Montorgueil, beginning at rue Rambuteau, 1er (Métro: Les Halles). During mornings at this grubby little cluster of food stalls, we've spotted some of France's finest chefs stocking up for the day. For more details, see "Food Markets" in chapter 10.
- **Window-Shopping in the Faubourg St-Honoré:** In the 1700s, the wealthiest Parisians resided in the Faubourg St-Honoré; today, the quarter is home to stores catering to the rich, particularly on rue du Faubourg St-Honoré and avenue Montaigne. Even if you don't buy anything, it's great to window-shop big names such as Hermès, Dior, Laroche, Courrèges, Cardin, and Saint Laurent. If you want to browse in the stores, be sure to dress the part. See chapter 10, "Shopping," for the lowdown on these boutiques.
- **Exploring Ile de la Cité's Flower Market:** A fine finish to any day (Mon–Sat) spent meandering along the Seine is a stroll through the **Marché aux Fleurs**, place Louis-Lépine (p. 267). You can buy rare flowers, the gems of the French Riviera—bouquets that have inspired artists throughout the centuries. Even the most basic hotel room will feel like a luxury suite once you fill it with bunches of carnations, lavender, roses, and tulips. On Sundays, the area is transformed into the **Marché aux Oiseaux**, where you can admire rare birds from around the world.
- **Going Gourmet at Fauchon:** An exotic world of food, **Fauchon** (p. 173) offers more than 20,000 products from around the globe. Everything you never knew you were missing is in aisle after aisle of coffees, spices, pastries, fruits, vegetables, rare Armagnacs, and much more. Take your pick: Tonganese mangoes, Scottish smoked salmon, preserved cocks' combs, Romanian rose-petal jelly, blue-red Indian pomegranates, golden Tunisian dates, larks stuffed with foie gras, dark morels from France's rich soil, Finnish reindeer's tongue, century-old eggs from China, and a Creole punch from Martinique, reputed to be the best anywhere.
- **Attending a Ballet or an Opera:** In 1989, the **Opéra Bastille** (p. 274) was inaugurated to compete with the

grande dame of the music scene, the **Opéra Garnier** (p. 275), which then was used solely for dance and soon closed for renovations. The Opéra Garnier reopened a few years ago, and opera has joined dance in the rococo splendor created by Charles Garnier, beneath a controversial ceiling by Chagall. The modern Opéra Bastille, France's largest opera house, with curtains by designer Issey Miyake, has opera and symphony performances in four concert halls (its main hall seats 2,700). Whether for a performance of Bizet or Tharp, dress with pomp and circumstance.

- **Sipping Cocktails at Willi's:** Back in the early 1970s, the first-timer to

Paris might have arrived with a copy of Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* and, taking the author's endorsement to heart, headed for Harry's Bar at "Sank roo doe Noo." Harry's is still around but now draws an older, more conservative clientele. Today's chic younger expats head for **Willi's Wine Bar**, 13 rue des Petits-Champs, 1er (☎ 01-42-61-05-09; Métro: Bourse, Palais Royal, or Pyramides; p. 286). Here, the long-haired young bartenders are mostly English, as are the waitresses, who are dressed in Laura Ashley garb. The place is like an informal club for Brits, Australians, and Yanks, especially in the afternoon. Some 300 wines await your selection.

2 The Best Splurge Hotels

- **Hôtel Ritz** (15 place Vendôme, 1er; ☎ 800/223-6800 or 01-43-16-30-30; www.ritzparis.com). This hotel, which gave the world the word "ritzy," meaning posh, occupies a magnificent palace overlooking the octagonal borders of one of the most perfect squares in the world. The decor is pure opulence. Marcel Proust wrote parts of *Remembrance of Things Past* here, and the world's greatest chef, Georges-Auguste Escoffier, perfected many of his recipes in the Ritz kitchens. See p. 84.
- **Four Seasons Hotel George V** (31 av. George V, 8e; ☎ 800/332-3442 or 01-49-52-70-00; www.fourseasons.com). Humorist Art Buchwald once wrote, "Paris without the George V would be Cleveland." The swanky address has long been a favorite of celebrities in every field, including Duke Ellington, who once wrote in his memoirs that his suite was so big that he couldn't find the way out. Its public and private rooms are decorated with a vast array of antiques and

Louis XIV tapestries worth millions. See p. 96.

- **Hôtel Meurice** (228 rue de Rivoli, 1er; ☎ 01-44-58-10-10; www.meuricehotel.com) has been restored to its former glory. It reigned as the queen-bee hotel of Paris in the 19th century and has made a comeback to preside over post-millennium Paris as well. From its Winter Garden to its sumptuous bedrooms that sheltered kings, this one is a winner. See p. 81.
- **Hôtel Pershing Hall** (49 rue Pierre Charron, 8e; ☎ 01-58-36-58-00; www.pershing-hall.com) is not as well known as the previous hotels, but it too ranks among Paris's pockets of posh. Converted from an elegant town house of the 19th century, it was drastically altered by Andrée Putnam, one of France's most celebrated modern designers, into this citadel of fine living. Built for the Comte de Paris and his mistress, it was the Paris headquarters for General John Pershing in World War I—hence, its name.

It's lavish, lush, and luxurious. See p. 98.

- **Plaza Athénée** (25 av. Montaigne, 8e; ☎ 866/732-1106 or 01-53-67-66-65; www.plaza-athenee-paris.com) is still the favorite lunchtime hang-out for Parisian couturiers. It's also a lot more than that, providing luxurious accommodations for the likes of the Rockefellers and super-wealthy Brazilians. This swanky citadel is graced with potted palms, crystal chandeliers, and elegant furnishings—you name it: Louis XV, Louis XVI, Regency, whatever. Its ivy-covered courtyard is a slice of heaven. See p. 98.
- **Hôtel d'Aubusson** (33 rue Dauphine, 6e; ☎ 01-43-29-43-43; www.hotel-daubusson.com) lies in the heart of St-Germain-des-Prés and is our favorite boutique hotel in Paris. It takes its name from the original Aubusson tapestries gracing its elegant

public rooms. Antiques and luxurious accessories make a stay here evocative of a visit to a classy private home, filled with tasteful, beautifully decorated bedrooms and intimate public salons with baronial furnishings evocative of the era of Louis XV. You can sleep under a ceiling with exposed beams in a canopied bed. See p. 109.

- **L'Hôtel** (13 rue des Beaux-Arts, 6e; ☎ 01-44-41-99-00; www.l-hotel.com) is precious—just precious—the Left Bank's most charming little town house hotel. And, yes, this former fleabag was where the great Oscar Wilde died, disgraced and penniless. That was Glenn Close or Robert De Niro you saw walking through the lobby, but not Elizabeth Taylor, because the rooms were too small for her luggage. The hotel is a triumph of Directoire architecture, and the ambience is oh, so seductive. See p. 109.

3 The Best Moderately Priced Hotels

- **Hôtel Duo** (11 rue du Temple, 4e; ☎ 01-42-72-72-22; www.duoparis.com) is a winner in the increasingly fashionable Marais district, convenient to the Picasso Museum and the Centre Pompidou. Parisian fashionistas have made this a favorite nesting place. The old architecture, including time-worn stones and exposed beams, has been respected; otherwise, the place is as up-to-date as tomorrow. A member of the staff jokingly suggested to us that this sophisticated rendezvous is “not for virgins.” See p. 91.
- **Hôtel des Deux-Iles** (59 rue St-Louis-en-l'Île, 4e; ☎ 01-43-26-13-35; www.deuxiles-paris-hotel.com). There exists no more platinum real estate, at least in our view, than the Ile St-Louis, Paris's most beautiful isle in the Seine. For a charming, yet

unpretentious, hotel on this island, we'd choose this restored 18th-century town house. We like the abundance of fresh flowers and the fireplace in the cellar bar. The rooms are a bit small, but this is one of the city's greatest locations for a hotel, and that should count for something. See p. 90.

- **Hôtel Saint-Louis** (75 rue St-Louis-en-l'Île, 4e; ☎ 01-46-34-04-80). Like Hôtel des Deux-Iles, this cozy nest, a restored 17th-century town house, occupies a “world apart” on a tiny island in the middle of the Seine. The rooms may be *petit*, but the charm of the place compensates, with its exposed ceiling beams, wooden Louis XIII furnishings, and modern bathrooms. Opt for a fifth-floor bedroom for a panoramic view over the rooftops of Paris. See p. 91.

- **Galileo Hôtel** (54 rue Galilee, 8e; ☎ 01-47-20-66-06; www.galileo-paris-hotel.com). In the super-expensive 8th Arrondissement, site of the Champs-Élysées and France's most expensive street, avenue Montaigne, this is a holdout since it's actually affordable to many visitors. In the epicenter of Paris, this restored town house is imbued with Parisian elegance and charm. Though understated, the bedrooms are tastefully furnished and most comfortable, and a few choice ones have glass-covered verandas. See p. 100.
- **Hotel Trocadéro La Tour** (5 bis rue Massenet, 16e; ☎ 01-45-24-43-03; www.paris-hotel-trocaderolatour.com). In a tony district known for its well-heeled bourgeoisie and upscale rents, this restored late-19th-century town house charges reasonable prices—for Paris, that is. Subdued elegance and refined comfort are just part of its allure, along with its view of the Eiffel Tower in the distance. From its tree-filled courtyard to its elegant, tastefully decorated bedrooms, this one is a winner and not as well known as it should be. See p. 101.
- **Hôtel de l'Abbaye Saint-Germain** (10 rue Cassette, 6e; ☎ 01-45-44-38-11; www.hotel-abbaye.com). For those who'd like to stay in the heart of the Quartier Latin in the 5th Arrondissement, this charming boutique hotel, originally a convent in the 1700s, has been restored with a certain grace and sophisticated flair. Brightly painted rooms with traditional French furnishings are inviting and comfortable, and the maintenance is first-rate. Grace notes include a courtyard with a fountain, along with flowerbeds and climbing ivy. Try for the upper-floor room with a terrace overlooking Paris. See p. 110.
- **Résidence des Arts** (14 rue Git-le-Coeur, 6e; ☎ 01-55-42-71-11; www.hotelresidenceartsparis.com). If your own "studio" in Left Bank Paris has always been a dream, you can rent one here, or else a tastefully decorated suite or apartment—all at an affordable price. In the heart of the Quartier Latin, this hotel was carved from a former apartment building to which two upper floors were added in 1998. Some of the units come with kitchenettes, and a bistro and restaurant are on site. See p. 113.

4 The Most Unforgettable Dining Experiences

- **Le Grand Véfour** (17 rue de Beaujolais, 1er; ☎ 01-42-96-56-27). Seductively and appropriately time-worn, this dining room is where Napoleon sat wooing Joséphine. Its Louis XVI–Directoire interior is a protected historic monument. With its haute cuisine, it has been the haunt of celebrities since 1760. Its cuisine, mercifully, is even better than ever, because it insists on hiring only the world's leading chefs. This monument to the past still tantalizes 21st-century palates. See p. 128.
- **Aux Lyonnais** (32 rue St-Marc, 2e; ☎ 01-42-96-65-04). Paris's bistro of bistros has been taken over by Alain Ducasse, the six-star Michelin chef and self-proclaimed "greatest in the world." In spite of that takeover, Aux Lyonnais remains the quintessential Parisian dining choice for Lyonnais specialties. As any city dweller of Lyon will tell you, that city is the gastronomic capital of France. The market-fresh produce is as new as the 1890s bistro is old, with its backdrop of potted palms, etched glass, and

- globe lamps in the best of the Belle Époque style. See p. 135.
- **Au Pied de Cochon** (6 rue Coquil- lière, 1er; ☎ 01-40-13-77-00). For years, it's been a Paris tradition to stop off at this joint in Les Halles for the famous onion soup at 3 o'clock in the morning after a night of revelry. The true Parisian also orders the restaurant's namesake—grilled pigs' feet with béarnaise sauce. You can also do as your grandpa did and wash down a dozen different varieties of oysters at the time-mellowed bar— along with champagne, but of course. See p. 132.
 - **Taillevant** (15 rue Lamennais, 8e; ☎ 01-44-95-15-01). Forget about sending the kids to college and instead enjoy one of the most memo- rable meals of your life at what is con- sistently hailed as Paris's temple of haute cuisine. Named after a 14th- century chef to the king and the author of the first French cookbook, this restaurant comes as close to per- fection as any in the world. In all of our years of dining here, the chef has never had a bad day. This is a true temple of grand cuisine with one of the world's top 10 wine lists. Although we've enjoyed much of the innovative cuisine of Alain Solivères, we are also grateful that he's kept that airy, sausage-shaped lobster soufflé on the menu. See p. 148.
 - **Carré des Feuillants** (14 rue de Cas- tiglione, 1er; ☎ 01-42-86-82-82): Chef Alain Dutournier presides over this temple of haute gastronomy, thrilling diners with his take on new French cuisine. As always, deluxe ingredients are prepared with one of the most finely honed techniques in all of Paris. This chef knows the value of simplicity touched with inspira- tion. See p. 128.
 - **Lasserre** (17 av. Franklin D. Roo- sevelt, 8e; ☎ 01-43-59-53-43): Each new generation discovered this ele- gant bastion of chic for itself. A tradi- tion since the late 1930s, Lasserre has seen the faces of the Golden Age (everyone from Marlene Dietrich to Audrey Hepburn) but also welcomes the stars of today, tempting them with sublime cuisine both modern and traditional. See p. 145.
 - **Crémérie-Restaurant Polidor** (41 rue Monsieur-le-Prince, 6e; ☎ 01-43- 26-95-34). A longtime favorite of students, artists, and the literati such as James Joyce and Jack Kerouac, this bistro in St-Germain-des-Prés has been around since 1845. We've been such regulars that our favorite wait- ress used to store our linen napkins in a wooden drawer for use on another night. One habitué we met here claimed he'd been dining at Polidor 2 or 3 nights a week for half a century. The pumpkin soup, the *boeuf bour- guignon*, the *blanquette de veau*— yes, the same recipes that delighted Hemingway—are still served here. See p. 165.
 - **L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon** (5–7 rue de Montalembert, 7e; ☎ 01-42-22- 56-56). What a discovery. When Joël Robuchon retired in the mid-1990s, he was hailed as the greatest chef in France, which may as well mean the world. Bored with retirement, he made a more modest comeback with this 7th Arrondissement delight. His innovative dishes are far less elaborate than they were in days of yore, but he still makes the best mashed potatoes the world has ever known, along with other market-fresh concoctions that will win your heart. We're talking the likes of such dishes as caramelized quail glazed with a shallot-perfumed sauce. See p. 168.

- **La Petite Chaise** (36 rue de Grenelle, 7e; © 01-42-22-13-35). Even on the most rushed of visits to Paris, we always drop in here for one of the best prix-fixe menus at the more affordable restaurants in Paris. “The Little Chair” (its English name) first

opened as an inn in 1680, when it was used for both food and its bedrooms upstairs, where discretion for afternoon dalliances was virtually assured. The time-honored cuisine is as French as Charles de Gaulle—and that is as it should be. See p. 170.

5 The Best Things to Do for Free (or Almost)

- **Meeting the Natives.** There is no page number to which you can turn for guidance here. You’re on your own. But meeting Parisians, and experiencing their cynical metropolitanism, is one of the adventures of traveling to Paris—and it’s free. Tolerance, gentleness, and patience are not their strongest points; they don’t suffer fools gladly, but adore eccentrics. Visitors often find Parisians brusque to the point of rudeness and preoccupied with their own affairs. However, this hard-boiled crust often protects a soft center. Compliment a surly bistro owner on her cuisine, and—nine times out of 10—she’ll melt before your eyes. Admire a Parisian’s dog or praise a window display, and you’ll find a loquaciously knowledgeable companion for the next 5 minutes. Ask about the correct pronunciation of a French word (before you mispronounce it), and a Parisian may become your language teacher. Try to meet a Parisian halfway with some kind of personalized contact. Only then do you learn their best qualities: their famed charm, their *savoir-faire*—and, yes, believe it or not, the delightful courtesy that marks their social life.
- **Trailing les Américains.** At 35 rue de Picpus, a few blocks from the place de la Nation, is a spot over which the Stars and Stripes have flown for more than a century and a half. It lies in a small secluded cemetery, marking the

grave of the Marquis de Lafayette—the man who, during the American Revolution, forged the chain that has linked the two countries ever since. Col. Charles E. Stanton came here to utter the famous words, *Lafayette, nous voila!* (“Lafayette, we are here!”) to announce the arrival of the World War I doughboys on French soil. At the pont de Grenelle, at Passy, you’ll find the original model of the **Statue of Liberty** that France presented to the people of the United States. One of the most impressive paintings in the **Musée de l’Armée** (p. 193) shows the Battle of Yorktown, which—however you learned it in school—was a combined Franco-American victory. Throughout the city, you’ll keep coming across statues, monuments, streets, squares, and plaques commemorating George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Presidents Wilson and Roosevelt, Generals Pershing and Eisenhower, and scores of lesser Yankee names.

- **Attending a Free Concert.** Summer brings a Paris joy: free concerts in parks and churches all over the city. Pick up an entertainment weekly for details. Some of the best concerts are held at the **American Church in Paris**, 65 quai d’Orsay, 7e (© 01-40-62-05-00; Métro: Invalides or Alma-Marceau; p. 276), which sponsors free concerts from September to June on Sunday at 5pm. You can also attend free concerts at **Eglise**

St-Merry, 78 rue St-Martin, 4e (© 01-42-71-48-15; Métro: Hôtel-de-Ville; p. 276). These performances are staged based on the availability of the performers, from September to July on Saturday at 9pm and again on Sunday at 4pm.

- **Hanging Out at the Place des Vosges.** Deep in the Marais, place des Vosges is more an enchanted island than a city square. This serenely lovely oasis is the oldest square in Paris and the most entrancing. Laid out in 1605 by order of Henri IV, it was the scene of innumerable cavaliers' duels. In the middle is a tiny park where you can sit and sun, listen to the splashing waters of the fountains, or else watch the kids at play. On three sides is an encircling arcaded walk, supported by arches and paved with ancient, worn flagstones. Sit sipping an espresso as the day passes you by. It's our all-time favorite spot in Paris for people-watching. See p. 64.
- **Viewing Avant-Garde Art.** Space is too tight to document the dozens of art galleries that abound in Paris, but the true devotee will find that not all great art in Paris is displayed in a museum. There is a tendency, however, for owners to open galleries around major museums, hoping to lure the art lovers in. This is especially true around the Musée Picasso and the Centre Pompidou, both in the Marais. Our favorite gallery in the Marais is **La Maison Rouge**, the red house at 10 bd. de la Bastille, 12e (© 01-40-01-08-81; Métro: Quai de la Rapée). It displays an ever-changing array of the "hottest" work—and the most avant-garde—of Parisian artists. The more traditional galleries are found in St-Germain-des-Prés, with **Galerie Adrien Maeght**, 42 rue du Bac, 7e (© 01-45-48-45-15; p. 253) being the market leader.
- **Seeing Paris from a Bus.** Most tours of Paris are expensive, but for only 1.30€ (\$1.70) you can ride one of the city's public buses traversing some of the most scenic streets. Our favorite is no. 29, which begins at historic Gare St-Lazare (Métro: St-Lazare), subject of Monet's painting *La Gare St-Lazare* at Musée d'Orsay. Featured in Zola's novel *La Bête Humaine*, the station also has a bus line. Aboard no. 29, you pass the famous Opéra Garnier (home of the Phantom) and proceed into the Marais district, passing by Paris's most beautiful square, place des Vosges. You end up at the Bastille district, home of the new opera. What we like about this bus is that it takes you along the side streets of Paris and not the major boulevards. It's a close encounter with back-street Paris and a cheap way to see the city without commentary.
- **Strolling the World's Grandest Promenade.** Pointing from place de la Concorde like a broad, straight arrow to the Arc de Triomphe at the far end, the **Champs-Élysées** (the main street of Paris) presents its grandest spectacle at night. Guidebook writers to Paris grow tired of repeating "the most in the world," but, of course, the Champs-Élysées is the world's most famous promenade. For the first third of the stroll from place de la Concorde, the avenue is hedged by chestnut trees. Then it changes into a double row of palatial hotels and shops, movie houses, office buildings, and block after block of sidewalk cafes. The automobile showrooms and gift stores have marred the Belle Epoque elegance of this stretch, but it's still the greatest vantage point from which to watch Paris roll by.
- **Cooling Off in the Jardin des Tuileries.** Right-Bank Parisians head to

the Tuileries Gardens to cool off on a hot summer day. The park stretches on the Right Bank of the Seine from the place de la Concorde to the doorstep of the Louvre. This exquisitely formal garden was laid out as a royal pleasure ground in 1564, but was thrown open to the public by the French Revolution. Filled with statues, fountains, and mathematically trimmed hedges, it's a bit too formal

for English gardeners who like their green spaces a little wilder. Its nicest feature is a series of round ponds on which kids sail armadas of model boats. Stand on the elevated terrace by the Seine, enjoying panoramic views over Paris, including the Arc de Triomphe and the Cour Napoléon of the Louvre. The sculptures by Rodin aren't bad either. Food stands and cafes with refreshing drinks await you.

6 The Best Museums

- **Musée du Louvre** (34–36 quai du Louvre, 1er; ☎ 01-40-20-53-17; www.louvre.fr). The Louvre's exterior is a triumph of French architecture, and its interior shelters an embarrassment of art, one of the greatest treasure troves known to Western civilization. Of the Louvre's more than 300,000 paintings, only a small percentage can be displayed at one time. The museum maintains its staid dignity and timelessness even though thousands of visitors traipse daily through its corridors, looking for the *Mona Lisa* or the *Venus de Milo*. I. M. Pei's controversial Great Pyramid nearly offsets the grandeur of the Cour Carrée, but it has a real functional purpose, as you will soon see. See p. 195.
- **Musée d'Orsay** (1 rue de Bellechasse, 7e; ☎ 01-40-49-48-14; www.musee-orsay.fr). The spidery glass-and-iron canopies of an abandoned railway station frame one of Europe's greatest museums of art. Devoted mainly to paintings of the 19th century, d'Orsay contains some of the most celebrated masterpieces of the French Impressionists, along with sculptures and decorative objects whose designs forever changed the way European artists interpreted line, movement, and color. In case you didn't know, d'Orsay is also where *Whistler's Mother* sits in her rocker. See p. 194.
- **Centre Pompidou** (place Georges-Pompidou, 4e; ☎ 01-44-78-12-33; www.centrepompidou.fr). "The most avant-garde building in the world," or so it is known, is a citadel of modern art, with exhibitions drawn from more than 40,000 works. Everything seemingly is here—from Calder's 1928 *Josephine Baker* (one of his earliest versions of the mobile) to a recreation of Brancusi's Jazz Age studio. See p. 199.
- **Musée Jacquemart-André** (158 bd. Haussmann, 8e; ☎ 01-45-62-11-59; www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com). The 19th-century town house, with its gilt salons and elegant winding staircase, contains the best small collection of 18th-century decorative art in Paris. The building and its contents were a bequest to the Institut de France by the late Mme Nélie Jacquemart-André, herself an artist of note. To her amazing collection of rare French decorative art, she added a rich trove of painting and sculpture from the Dutch and Flemish schools, as well as paintings and objets d'art from the Italian Renaissance. See p. 203.
- **Musée National du Moyen Age/Thermes de Cluny** (in the Hotel de

- Cluny, 6 place Paul-Painlevé, 5e; © 01-45-62-11-59; www.musee-moyenage.fr). This is an enchantress of a museum, housing some of the most beautiful medieval art still in existence. The museum occupies one of the two Gothic private residences left from Paris in the 15th century. Dark, rough-walled, and evocative, the Cluny is devoted to the church art and castle crafts of the Middle Ages. It is more celebrated for its tapestries—among them the world-famed series of *The Lady and the Unicorn*, gracefully displayed in a circular room on the second floor. Downstairs you can visit the ruins of Roman baths, dating from around A.D. 200. See p. 204.
- **Musée Marmottan-Claude Monet** (2 rue Louis-Boilly, 16e; © 01-44-96-50-33; www.marmottan.com). On the edge of the Bois de Boulogne, this once rarely visited museum is now one of the most frequented in Paris. It was rescued from obscurity on February 5, 1966, when the museum fell heir to more than 130 paintings, watercolors, pastels, and drawings of Claude Monet, the “father of Impressionism.” A gift of Monet’s son Michel, the bequest is one of the greatest art acquisitions in France. Had an old widow in Brooklyn suddenly inherited the fortune of a J. P. Morgan, the event would not have been more startling. Exhibited here is the painting, *Impression, Sunrise*, which named the artistic movement. See p. 203.
 - **Musée Picasso** (in the Hotel Salé, 5 rue de Thorigny, 3e; © 01-42-71-25-21; www.musee-picasso.fr). Deep in the heart of the Marais, this museum has been hailed in the press as a repository “for Picasso’s Picassos.” The state acquired the world’s greatest collection in lieu of a \$50-million inheritance tax: 203 paintings, 158 sculptures, 16 collages, 19 bas-reliefs, 88 ceramics, and more than 1,500 sketches and 1,600 engravings. The work spans 75 years of Picasso’s life. See p. 205.
 - **Musée Rodin** (in the Hotel Biron, 77 rue de Varenne, 7e; © 01-44-18-61-10; www.musee-rodin.fr). Auguste Rodin, the man credited with freeing French sculpture from classicism, once lived at, and had his studio in, this charming 18th-century mansion across from Napoleon’s tomb. Today, the house and its garden are filled with his works, a soul-satisfying feast for the Rodin enthusiast. In the cobbled Court of Honor, within the walls as you enter, you’ll see *The Thinker* crouched on his pedestal. The *Burgbers of Calais* are grouped off to the left; and, to the far left, the writhing *Gates of Hell* can be seen, atop which another *Thinker* once more meditates. In the almost-too-packed rooms, men and angels emerge from blocks of marble, their hands twisted in supplication, and the nude torso of Balzac rises from a tree. See p. 205.

7 The Best Neighborhoods for Getting Lost

- **Montmartre.** Striding a hill atop Paris, Montmartre used to be a village of artists, glorified by masters such as Utrillo, and painted, sketched, sculpted, and photographed by 10,000 lesser lights. Today, it’s overrun by tourists, building speculators, and nightclub entrepreneurs who moved in as the artists moved out. However, a few still linger and so does much of the villagelike charm. Of all the places for wandering the cobbled streets of old Paris, Montmartre, especially in its back streets and alleyways, gets our vote. The center point is the place du Tertre, where

you can head out on your journey of exploration. Gleaming through the trees from here is the Basilica of Sacré-Coeur, built in an oddly Oriental neo-Byzantine style. Behind the church and clinging to the hillside below are steep and crooked little streets that seem—almost—to have survived the relentless march of progress. Rue des Saules still has Montmartre's last vineyard. The rue Lepic still looks—almost—the way Renoir, the melancholic Van Gogh, and the dwarfish genius Toulouse-Lautrec saw it. See p. 67.

- **Quartier Latin.** Over the Seine on the Left Bank, the Latin Quarter lies in the 5th Arrondissement and consists of streets winding around the Paris University, of which the Sorbonne is only a part. The logical starting point is place Saint-Michel, right on the river, with an impressive fountain. From here you can wander at leisure, getting lost as you discover the doglegged cluster of alleys adjoining the river—rue de la Huchette, rue de la Harpe, rue St-Séverin. Each generation makes discoveries of its own, and everything is new again. End up by strolling along Boulevard St-Germain, lined with sophisticated cafes and some of the most avant-garde fashion shops in Paris. See p. 64.
- **Le Marais.** Very few cities on earth boast an entire district that can be labeled a sight. Paris has several, including the vaguely defined maze of streets north of place de la Bastille, known as Le Marais, or “the marshland.” During the 17th century, this was a region of aristocratic mansions,

which lost their elegance when the fashionable set moved elsewhere. The houses lost status, but they remain standing and restored today, as the once-decaying Marais has been gentrified. Today, it's one of the most fashionable districts in Paris, home to funky shops, offbeat hotels, dozens of bistros, hot bars, and “gay Paree.” See p. 63.

- **Ile St-Louis.** A footbridge behind Notre-Dame leads to another enchanting island on the Seine, a world of tree-shaded quays, town houses with courtyards, and antiques shops. This smaller and more tranquil of the Seine islands has remained much as it was in the 17th century. Over the years, many illustrious French have called St-Louis home, none more famous than Voltaire. Sober patrician houses stand along the four quays, and the feverish beat of Paris seems 100 miles away. This is our favorite real estate for wandering in the whole city. See p. 63.
- **Ile de la Cité.** “The cradle of Paris,” where the city was born, is actually an island shaped like a great ship in the middle of the Seine. Home to France's greatest cathedral, Notre-Dame, it invites exploration and wandering. Home to French kings until the 14th century, Cité still has a curiously medieval air, with massive gray walls rising up all around you, relieved by tiny patches of parkland. The island is home to Sainte-Chapelle and the Conciergerie. After these stellar attractions, save time for wandering about and discovering Cité's secrets, such as the square du Vert Galant. See p. 63.