

Planning Your Trip to Paris

This chapter provides the nuts-and-bolts details you need before setting off for Paris—everything from information sources to money matters to the major airlines and how to save money on your flight.

1 Visitor Information

TOURIST OFFICES

Your best source of information is the **French Government Tourist Office**, which you can reach at the following addresses:

IN THE UNITED STATES 444 Madison Ave., 16th Floor, New York, NY 10022 (☎ 514/288-1904; fax 212/838-7855); 875 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 3214, Chicago, IL 60611 (☎ 514/288-1904); or 9454 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 715, Beverly Hills, CA 90212 (☎ 514/288-1904). To request additional information, call **France on Call** at ☎ 900/990-0040; 50¢ per min.

IN CANADA Maison de la France/French Government Tourist Office, 1800 av. McGill College, Suite 1010, Montreal, H3A 2W9 (☎ 514/288-1904).

IN THE UNITED KINGDOM Maison de la France/French Government Tourist Office, 178 Piccadilly, London, W1J 9AL (☎ 090/6824-4123; 60p per minute).

IN AUSTRALIA French Tourist Bureau, 25 Blich St., Sydney, NSW 2000 (☎ 02/9231-5244; fax 02/9221-8682).

WEBSITES

The French Government Tourist Office's home on the Internet is at www.franceguide.com or www.francetourism.com. The website of the Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau, at www.paris-touristoffice.com or www.parisinfo.com, provides information on hotels, restaurants, attractions, entertainment, and events.

2 Entry Requirements

PASSPORTS

For information on how to get a passport, go to “Passports” in the “Fast Facts” section in chapter 2—the websites listed provide downloadable passport applications, as well as the current fees for processing passport applications. For an up-to-date, country-by-country listing of passport requirements around the world, go to the “Foreign Entry Requirement” Web page of the U.S. State Department at <http://travel.state.gov>. All non-French nationals need a **valid passport** to enter France (check its expiration date). Passport requirements for children are the same as for adults. If your passport is lost or stolen, go to your consulate as soon as possible for a replacement.

CUSTOMS

WHAT YOU CAN BRING INTO PARIS

Customs restrictions differ for citizens of European Union (EU) countries and non-EU countries.

For Non-EU Nationals You can bring in, duty-free, 200 cigarettes, 100 cigarillos, 50 cigars, or 250 grams of smoking tobacco. You can also bring in 2 liters of wine and either 1 liter of alcohol more than 22% or 2 liters of alcohol less than 22%. In addition, you can bring in 60cc (2 oz.) of perfume and a quarter-liter of eau de toilette. Visitors ages 15 and older may bring in other goods totaling 175€ (\$228); the allowance for those age 14 and younger is 90€ (\$117). (Customs officials tend to be lenient about general merchandise, realizing the limits are unrealistically low.)

For EU Citizens Visitors from European Union countries can bring into France any amount of goods as long as they’re intended for personal use—not for resale.

WHAT YOU CAN TAKE HOME FROM PARIS

U.S. Citizens

Returning U.S. citizens who have been away for at least 48 hours are allowed to bring back, once every 30 days, \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. You’ll be charged a flat rate of 4% duty on the next \$1,000 worth of purchases. Be sure to have your receipts handy. On mailed gifts, the duty-free limit is \$200. With some exceptions, you cannot bring fresh fruits and vegetables into the United States.

For more specifics on what you can bring back and the corresponding fees, download the invaluable free pamphlet *Know Before You Go* online at www.cbp.gov. (Click on “Travel,” and then click

on “Know Before You Go! Online Brochure.”) Or contact the U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP), 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20229 (☎ 877/287-8667) and request the pamphlet.

Canadian Citizens

Canadian citizens are allowed a C\$750 exemption, and you're allowed to bring back duty-free 1 carton of cigarettes or 2.2 pounds of tobacco, 40 imperial ounces of liquor, and 50 cigars. In addition, you're allowed to mail gifts to Canada valued at less than C\$60 a day, provided they're unsolicited and don't contain alcohol or tobacco (write on the package “Unsolicited gift, less than \$60 value”). All valuables should be declared on the Y-38 form before departure from Canada, including serial numbers of valuables you already own, such as expensive foreign cameras. **Note:** The C\$750 exemption can be used only once a year and only after an absence of 7 days.

For a clear summary of Canadian rules, write for the booklet *I Declare*, issued by the **Canada Border Services Agency** (☎ 800/461-9999 in Canada, or 204/983-3500; www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca).

U.K. Citizens

Citizens of the U.K. who are returning from a European Union (EU) country will go through a separate Customs Exit (called the “Blue Exit”) especially for EU travelers. In essence, there is no limit on what you can bring back from an EU country, as long as the items are for personal use (this includes gifts) and you have already paid the necessary duty and tax. However, customs law sets out guidance levels. If you bring in more than these levels, you may be asked to prove that the goods are for your own use. Guidance levels on goods bought in the EU for your own use are 3,200 cigarettes, 200 cigars, 400 cigarillos, 3 kilograms of smoking tobacco, 10 liters of spirits, 90 liters of wine, 20 liters of fortified wine (such as port or sherry), and 110 liters of beer.

For more information, contact **HM Revenue Customs** at ☎ 0845/010-9000 (from outside the U.K., 02920/501-261), or consult their website at www.hmrc.gov.uk.

Australian Citizens

The duty-free allowance in Australia is A\$900 or, for those younger than 18, A\$450. Citizens can bring in 250 cigarettes or 250 grams of loose tobacco and 2.25 liters of alcohol. If you're returning with valuables you already own, such as foreign-made cameras, you should file form B263.

A helpful brochure, available from Australian consulates or Customs offices, is *Know Before You Go*. For more information, call the **Australian Customs Service** at ☎ **1300/363-263**, or log on to **www.customs.gov.au**.

New Zealand Citizens

The duty-free allowance for New Zealand is NZ\$700. Citizens older than 17 can bring in 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars, or 250 grams of tobacco (or a mixture of all three if their combined weight doesn't exceed 250g), plus 4.5 liters of wine and beer or 1.125 liters of liquor. New Zealand currency does not carry import or export restrictions. Fill out a certificate of export, listing the valuables you are taking out of the country; that way, you can bring them back without paying duty.

Most questions are answered in a free pamphlet available at New Zealand consulates and Customs offices: *New Zealand Customs Guide for Travellers, Notice no. 4*. For more information, contact **New Zealand Customs Service**, The Customhouse, 17–21 Whitmore St., Box 2218, Wellington (☎ **04/473-6099** or 0800/428-786; www.customs.govt.nz).

3 When to Go

In August, Parisians traditionally leave for their annual holidays, and the city serves visitors on a skeleton staff. July has also become a popular vacation month, when many restaurateurs take holidays.

Hotels, especially first class and deluxe, are easy to come by in July and August. Budget hotels, on the other hand, are likely to be full during these months of student invasion. You should also try to avoid late September and the first 2 weeks in October, when the annual auto show attracts thousands of enthusiasts.

Balmy weather in Paris has prompted more popular songs and love ballads than weather conditions in any other city. But the weather here is actually quite fickle. Rain is more common than snow throughout the winter, prompting longtime residents to complain about the occasional bone-chilling dampness.

In recent years, Paris has had about 15 snow days a year, and there are only a few oppressively hot days (over 86°F, or 30°C) in summer. What will most likely chill a Parisian heart, however, are the winds that sweep along the city's boulevards, channeled by bordering buildings. Other than these occasional winds and rain (which add an undeniable drama to many of the city's panoramas), Paris has some of the most pleasant weather of any capital in Europe, with an average temperature of 53°F (12°C).

4 Getting There

BY PLANE

Paris has two international airports: **Orly** (☎ 01-49-75-15-15), 14km (8¾ miles) south of the city, and **Charles de Gaulle (Roissy)** (☎ 01-48-62-22-80), 23km (14 miles) northeast. A 13€ (\$17) Air France shuttle operates between the two every 30 minutes, taking 50 to 75 minutes. Orly is more convenient to central Paris, with cheaper transportation costs, but you really don't have a choice here in most cases. Transatlantic flights land at Charles de Gaulle, with Orly used for domestic and charter flights. For information on both airports, go to www.aeroportsdeparis.fr.

High season on most airlines' routes to Paris is usually June to the beginning of September. This is the most expensive and most crowded time to travel. **Shoulder season** is April to May, early September to October, and December 15 to December 24. **Low season** is November 1 to December 14 and December 25 to March 31.

THE MAJOR AIRLINES

FROM NORTH AMERICA One of the best choices for travelers in the southeastern United States and the Midwest is **Delta Airlines** (☎ 800/221-1212; www.delta.com). Delta flies direct to Paris from Atlanta, which is a hub for frequent flights from cities such as New Orleans, Phoenix, Columbia (South Carolina), and Cincinnati. Delta also operates daily nonstop flights to Paris from Cincinnati and New York.

Another good option is **Continental Airlines** (☎ 800/231-0856; www.continental.com), serving the Northeast and much of the Southwest through its busy hubs in Newark (New Jersey) and Houston. Continental provides nonstop flights to Paris from both cities.

The French flag carrier, **Air France** (☎ 800/237-2747; www.airfrance.com), uses Paris as a hub and offers daily or several-times-a-week flights to Paris from Newark; Washington, D.C.; Miami; Chicago; New York; Houston; San Francisco; Los Angeles; Boston; Cincinnati; Atlanta; Montreal; Toronto; and Mexico City.

In 2004, Air France acquired control of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, which is leading to the creation of **Air France-KLM**, the world's biggest airline in terms of revenue. In the lifetime of this edition, KLM and Air France will begin coordinating their schedules and fares, acting as a unit. Airline spokespersons predict that the merger, in time, will lead to lower costs, lower fares, and better connections between flights.

American Airlines (☎ 800/433-7300; www.aa.com) provides daily nonstop flights to Paris from Dallas/Fort Worth, Chicago, Miami, Boston, and New York.

US Airways (☎ 800/428-4322; www.usairways.com) offers daily nonstop service from Philadelphia to Paris.

If you'd like to see London before traveling on to Paris, **British Airways** (☎ 800/247-9293; www.britishairways.com) has dozens of flights from North American cities to London. You can fly first from, say, New York to London and then take the BA shuttle flight to Paris following a holiday in England.

Canadians usually choose **Air Canada** (☎ 888/247-2262 from the U.S. and Canada; www.aircanada.ca) for flights to Paris from Toronto and Montreal. Nonstop flights from Montreal and Toronto depart every evening. Two of the nonstop flights from Toronto are shared with Air France and feature Air France aircraft.

FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM From London, **Air France** (☎ 0845/084-5111; www.airfrance.com) and **British Airways** (☎ 0870/850-9850 in the U.K.; www.britishairways.com) fly frequently to Paris, offering up to 17 flights daily from Heathrow. **Aer Lingus** (☎ 866/IRISH-AIR; www.aerlingus.com) has frequent direct flights from Dublin to Paris throughout the day. Many commercial travelers also use regular flights from the London City Airport in the Docklands. There are also direct flights to Paris from major cities such as Manchester, Edinburgh, and Southampton. For more information, contact Air France, British Airways, or **British Midland** (☎ 0870/607-0555; www.flybmi.com).

FROM AUSTRALIA Getting to Paris from Australia is rather difficult, because **Air France** (☎ 02-92-44-21-00; www.airfrance.com) has discontinued all direct flights to and from that country, requiring transfers through Singapore, among others, with ongoing service to and from Sydney provided by Qantas. Consequently, on virtually any route, and with any airline you take, you have to change planes at least once en route. **British Airways** (☎ 1300-767-177; www.britishairways.com) flies daily from Sydney and Melbourne to London in time for any of several connecting flights to Paris. **Qantas** (☎ 612/13-13-13-68-46; www.qantas.com.au) can route passengers from Australia into London, where plentiful connections exist for the hop across the Channel.

GETTING INTO TOWN FROM THE AIRPORT

CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRPORT (ROISSY) At Charles de Gaulle, foreign carriers use Aéro-gare 1, and Air France uses Aéro-gare 2.

From Aéro-gare 1, take a walkway to the passport checkpoint and the Customs area. A **shuttle bus** (*navette*) links the terminals.

The free shuttle bus connecting Aéro-gare 1 with Aéro-gare 2 also transports passengers to the Roissy rail station, where fast **RER trains** (Line B) leave every 15 minutes daily between 5:30am to 11:30pm for such Métro stations as Gare du Nord, Châtelet, Luxembourg, Port Royal, and Denfert-Rochereau. A typical RER fare from Roissy to any point in central Paris is 13€ (\$17) in first class or 8€ (\$10) in second.

You can also take either of two Air France shuttle buses, both of which depart from Roissy for points within central Paris. Line 2 departs at 15-minute intervals every day between 6am and 11pm, charging 10€ (\$13) each way for the 40-minute transit to the place de l'Étoile, with a stop en route at Porte Maillot. Line 4 departs at 30-minute intervals every day between 7am and 9:30pm, charging 12€ (\$16) for the 50-minute trip to the Gare Montparnasse, making an intermediate stop at the Gare de Lyon en route. From any of those points within central Paris, Métro lines can carry you on to virtually any other point within the city.

Another option, the **Roissybus** (☎ 01-48-04-18-24), departs from a point near the corner of the rue Scribe and place de l'Opéra every 15 minutes from 5:45am to 11pm. The cost for the 50-minute ride is 8.20€ (\$11).

Taxis from Roissy into the city run about 45€ (\$59) on the meter. At night (8pm–7am) fares are about 40% higher. Long queues of both taxis and passengers form outside of each of the airport's terminals in a surprisingly orderly fashion.

ORLY AIRPORT Orly has two terminals: Orly Sud (south) for international flights and Orly Ouest (west) for domestic flights. A free shuttle bus links them.

Air France buses (☎ 01-41-56-89-00) leave from Exit E of Orly Ouest and from Exit K, Platform 5, of Orly Sud every 15 to 20 minutes from 5:40am to 11pm for Gare St-Michel, Gare d'Austerlitz, or Gare Montparnasse in central Paris at a cost of 11€ (\$14) one-way. Another bus goes direct to Roissy Airport (CDG).

An alternative method for reaching central Paris involves taking a **monorail** (Orly Val) to the RER station of Anthony, and then the RER train into downtown Paris. The Orly Val makes stops at the north and south terminals and continues at 8-minute intervals for the 10-minute ride to the Anthony RER station. At Anthony, you'll board an RER train (Line B) for the 30-minute ride into the city.

Value Airport Shuttle

A commuter service is provided by **PariShuttle**, 103 rue Villiers de l'Isle Adam, 75020 Paris (☎ **01-53-39-18-18**; www.parishuttle.com). Before collecting your baggage at the airport, you can call its toll-free number (☎ **08-00-69-96-99**) and later make your way to the arranged meeting point. You can also call and reserve by phone before your arrival in Paris. PariShuttle will take you to your desired address in Paris, and service in the eight-seat minivans runs 7 days a week. The cost is 25€ (\$33) per person or 19€ (\$25) per person if two or more people are traveling together.

The cost of the Orly Val monorail plus the RER (Line B) transit into Paris is 9€ (\$12), a fare that may seem a bit high, but that offsets the horrendous construction costs of a monorail that sails above the congested roadways encircling the airport.

A **taxi** from Orly to the center of Paris costs about 40€ (\$52); it's more at night and on weekends. Returning to the airport, **buses** to Orly leave from the Invalides terminal to Orly Sud or Orly Ouest every 15 minutes, taking about 30 minutes.

Caution: Don't take a meterless taxi from Orly Sud or Orly Ouest—it's much safer (and usually cheaper) to hire a metered cab from the taxi queues, which are under the scrutiny of a police officer.

LONG-HAUL FLIGHTS: HOW TO STAY COMFORTABLE

- Your choice of airline and airplane will definitely affect your leg room. Find more details about U.S. airlines at **www.seatguru.com**. For international airlines, the research firm Skytrax has posted a list of average seat pitches at **www.airlinequality.com**.
- Emergency exit seats and bulkhead seats typically have the most legroom. Emergency exit seats are usually left unassigned until the day of a flight (to ensure that someone able-bodied fills the seats); it's worth getting to the ticket counter early to snag one of these spots for a long flight. Many passengers find that bulkhead seating (the row facing the wall at the front of the cabin) offers more legroom, but keep in mind that bulkheads are where airlines often put baby bassinets, so you may be sitting next to an infant.

- To have two seats for yourself in a three-seat row, try for an aisle seat in a center section toward the back of coach. If you're traveling with a companion, book an aisle and a window seat. Middle seats are usually booked last, so you might end up with three seats to yourselves.
- Ask about entertainment options. Many airlines offer seatback video systems where you get to choose your movies or play video games—but only on some of their planes. (Boeing 777s are your best bet.)
- To sleep, avoid the last row of any section or the row in front of an emergency exit, as these seats are the least likely to recline. Avoid seats near highly trafficked toilet areas. Avoid seats in the back of many jets—these can be narrower than those in the rest of coach. You also may want to reserve a window seat so you can rest your head and avoid being bumped in the aisle.
- Get up, walk around, and stretch every 60 to 90 minutes to keep your blood flowing.
- Drink water before, during, and after your flight to combat the lack of humidity in airplane cabins. Avoid alcohol, which will dehydrate you.
- If you're flying with kids, don't forget to carry on toys, books, pacifiers, and chewing gum to help them relieve ear pressure buildup during ascent and descent.

BY CAR

Driving in Paris is definitely not recommended. Parking is difficult; traffic is dense; and networks of one-way streets make navigation, even with the best of maps, a problem. If you do drive, remember that Paris is encircled by a ring road called the *périphérique*. Always obtain detailed directions to your destination, including the name of the exit on the *périphérique* you're looking for (exits aren't numbered). Avoid rush hours. Again, parking is difficult: Few hotels, except the luxury ones, have garages, but the staff will usually be able to direct you to one nearby.

The **major highways** into Paris are the A1 from the north (Great Britain and Benelux); A13 from Rouen, Normandy, and northwest France; A10 from Bordeaux, the Pyrenees, France's southwest, and Spain; A6 from Lyon, the French Alps, the Riviera, and Italy; and A4 from Metz, Nancy, and Strasbourg in eastern France.

BY TRAIN

If you're already in Europe, you might decide to travel to Paris by train, especially if you have a **Eurailpass**. Rail passes or individual rail tickets within Europe are available at most travel agencies, at any office of **Rail Europe** (☎ 888/382-7245; www.raileurope.com), or at **Eurostar** (☎ 800/EUROSTAR in the U.S., 0870/510-4105 in London, 01-70-70-99-49 in Paris; www.eurostar.com).

There are six major train stations in Paris: **Gare d'Austerlitz**, 55 quai d'Austerlitz, 13e (serving the southwest, with trains from the Loire Valley, the Bordeaux country, and the Pyrenees); **Gare de l'Est**, place du 11 Novembre 1918, 10e (serving the east, with trains from Strasbourg, Nancy, Reims, and beyond to Zurich, Basel, Luxembourg, and Austria); **Gare de Lyon**, 20 bd. Diderot, 12e (serving the southeast with trains from the Côte d'Azur and Provence to Geneva, Lausanne, and Italy); **Gare Montparnasse**, 17 bd. Vaugirard, 15e (serving the west, with trains from Brittany); **Gare du Nord**, 18 rue de Dunkerque, 15e (serving the north, with trains from Holland, Denmark, Belgium, and Germany); and **Gare St-Lazare**, 13 rue d'Amsterdam, 8e (serving the northwest, with trains from Normandy).

For general train information and to make reservations, call **Rail Europe** at ☎ 01-70-70-60-88 daily from 7am to 8pm. Buses operate between rail stations. Each of these stations has a Métro stop, making the entire city easily accessible. Taxis are also available at designated stands at every station. Look for the sign that says TETE DE STATION. Be alert in train stations, especially at night.

BY FERRY FROM ENGLAND

Despite competition from the Channel Tunnel (Chunnel), services aboard ferries and hydrofoils operate day and night in all seasons, with the exception of last-minute cancellations during storms. Many Channel crossings are timed to coincide with the arrival/departure of major trains (especially those between London and Paris); trains let you off a short walk from the piers. Most ferries carry cars, trucks, and massive amounts of freight, but some hydrofoils take passengers only. The major routes include at least 12 trips a day between Dover or Folkestone and Calais or Boulogne. Hovercraft and hydrofoils make the trip from Dover to Calais, the shortest distance across the Channel, in 40 minutes during good weather; the slower-moving ferries can take several hours, depending on weather and tides. If you're bringing a car, it's important to

make reservations, as space below decks is usually crowded. Timetables can vary depending on the weather and many other factors.

The leading operator of ferries across the Channel is **P&O Ferries** (☎ 0870/520-0333 in England; www.poferries.com). It operates car and passenger ferries between Portsmouth, England, and Cherbourg, France (three departures a day; 4¼ hr. each way during daylight hours, 7 hr. each way at night); between Portsmouth and Le Havre, France (three a day; 5½ hr. each way). The most popular routes are between Dover and Calais, France (25 sailings a day; 75 min. each way), which costs 19€ (\$25) one-way for adults; children under 4 go free.

The shortest and most popular route is between Calais and Dover. **Hoverspeed** operates at least 12 hovercraft crossings daily; the trip takes 35 minutes. It also runs a SeaCat (a catamaran propelled by jet engines) that takes longer, just under 1 hour, between Dover and Calais. For reservations and information, call **Hoverspeed** (☎ 800/677-8585 in North America or 0870/164-2114 in England; www.hoverspeed.com). Typical one-way fares are 19€ (\$25) per person.

If you plan to transport a rental car between England and France, check in advance with the rental company about license and insurance requirements and additional drop-off charges. Be aware that many car-rental companies, for insurance reasons, forbid transport of one of their vehicles over the water between England and France. Transport of a car each way begins at 150€ (\$195).

UNDER THE CHANNEL

One of the great engineering feats of our time, the \$15-billion Channel Tunnel (Chunnel) opened in 1994, and the **Eurostar Express** now has daily service from London to both Paris and Brussels. The 50km (31-mile) journey takes 35 minutes, though actual time spent in the Chunnel is only 19 minutes. Stores selling duty-free goods, restaurants, service stations, and bilingual staffs are available to travelers on both sides of the Channel.

Eurostar tickets are available through **Rail Europe** (☎ 888/382-7245; www.raileurope.com). In Great Britain, make reservations for **Eurostar** at ☎ 0870/518-6186; in the United States, call ☎ 800/EUROSTAR. Chunnel train travel is roughly competitive with air travel, if you calculate door-to-door travel time. Trains leave from London's Waterloo Station and arrive in Paris at the Gare du Nord.

The tunnel also accommodates passenger cars, charter buses, taxis, and motorcycles, transporting them under the Channel from

Folkestone, England, to Calais, France. It operates 24 hours a day, running every 15 minutes during peak travel times and at least once an hour at night. You can buy tickets at the tollbooth at the tunnel's entrance. With **Eurotunnel** (☎ **0870/535-3535**; www.eurotunnel.com), gone are the days of weather-related delays, seasickness, and advance reservations.

Before they board Eurotunnel, motorists stop at a tollbooth and pass through British and French immigration at the same time. Then they drive onto a 1km-long (half-mile) train and travel through the tunnel. During the ride, motorists stay in air-conditioned carriages, remaining inside their cars or stepping outside to stretch their legs. When the trip is completed, they simply drive off. Total travel time is about an hour. Once on French soil, British drivers must remember to drive on the right-hand side of the road.

5 Money & Costs

CURRENCY

The **euro**, the single European currency, became the official currency of France and 11 other participating countries on January 1, 1999. The euro didn't go into general circulation until January 1, 2002. The old currency, the French franc, disappeared into history on March 1, 2002, replaced by the euro, which is officially abbreviated "EUR" or €. Exchange rates of participating countries are locked into a common currency, fluctuating against the dollar, and the difference could affect the relative costs of your trip. For up-to-the-minute currency conversions, go to www.xe.com/ucc. For more details on the euro, check out www.europa.eu.int/euro.

Most banks in Paris are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 4:30pm, and a few are open Saturday; ask at your hotel for the location of the one nearest you. Most post offices will convert currency, and exchanges are also available at Paris airports and train stations and along most of the major boulevards. They charge a small commission. Some exchange places charge favorable rates to lure you into their stores. For example, **Paris Vision**, 214 rue de Rivoli, 1er (☎ **01-42-60-31-25**; Métro: Tuileries), maintains a minibank in the back of a travel agency, open daily from 7am to 9pm. Its rates are only a fraction less favorable than those offered for large blocks of money as listed by the Paris stock exchange.

ATMs

The easiest and best way to get cash away from home is from an ATM (automated teller machine), sometimes referred to as a "cash

machine,” or a “cashpoint.” The **Cirrus** (☎ 800/424-7787; www.mastercard.com) and **PLUS** (☎ 800/843-7587; www.visa.com) networks span the globe; look at the back of your bank card to see which network you’re on, and then call or check online for ATM locations at your destination. Be sure you know your personal identification number (PIN) and daily withdrawal limit before you depart. You may need a **four-digit** personal identification number, or **PIN** (six digits may not work), to use ATMs in Paris. If you have a six-digit code, you may want to consider getting a new one for your trip.

Note: Remember that many banks impose a fee every time you use a card at another bank’s ATM, and that fee can be higher for international transactions (up to \$5 or more) than for domestic ones. In addition, the bank from which you withdraw cash may charge its own fee. For international withdrawal fees, ask your bank.

CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards are another safe way to carry money. They also provide a convenient record of all your expenses, and they generally offer relatively good exchange rates. You can withdraw cash advances from your credit cards at banks or ATMs, provided you know your PIN. Keep in mind that you’ll pay interest from the moment of your withdrawal, even if you pay your monthly bills on time. Also, note that many banks now assess a 1% to 3% transaction fee on all charges you incur abroad (whether you’re using the local currency or your native currency). The credit cards most commonly accepted in Paris are American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard, and Visa, but not the Discover card. For emergency numbers, see “Lost & Found” in “Fast Facts” in chapter 2.

TRAVELER’S CHECKS

Traveler’s checks are still an option in Paris, but with 24-hour ATMs around every corner, they are fading in use. However, the frugal traveler still carries them because they are cheaper than withdrawing money from the ATM every day.

You can buy traveler’s checks at most banks. They are offered in denominations of \$20, \$50, \$100, \$500, and sometimes \$1,000. Generally, you’ll pay a service charge ranging from 1% to 4%.

The most popular traveler’s checks are offered by: American Express (☎ 800/807-6233 or 800/221-7282 for cardholders—this number accepts collect calls, offers service in several foreign languages, and exempts AmEx gold and platinum cardholders from the 1% fee); Visa (☎ 800/732-1322)—AAA members can obtain Visa checks for

a \$9.95 fee (for checks up to \$1,500) at most AAA offices or by calling ☎ **866/339-3378**; and MasterCard (☎ **800/223-9920**).

6 Sustainable Tourism/Ecotourism

Each time you take a flight or drive a car CO₂ is released into the atmosphere. You can help neutralize this danger to our planet through “carbon offsetting”—paying someone to reduce your CO₂ emissions by the same amount you’ve added. Carbon offsets can be purchased in the U.S. from companies such as **Carbonfund.org** (www.carbonfund.org) and **TerraPass** (www.terrapass.org), and from **Climate Care** (www.climatecare.org) in the U.K.

Although one could argue that any vacation that includes an airplane flight can’t be truly “green,” you can go on holiday and still contribute positively to the environment. You can offset carbon emissions from your flight in other ways. Choose forward-looking companies that embrace responsible development practices, helping preserve destinations for the future by working alongside local people.

Responsible Travel (www.responsibletravel.com) contains a great source of sustainable travel ideas and is run by a spokesperson for responsible tourism in the travel industry. **Sustainable Travel International** (www.sustainabletravelinternational.org) promotes responsible tourism practices and issues an annual *Green Gear & Gift Guide*.

You can find eco-friendly travel tips, statistics, and touring companies and associations—listed by destination under “Travel Choice”—at the TIES website, www.ecotourism.org. Also check out **Conservation International** (www.conservation.org)—which, with *National Geographic Traveler*, annually presents **World Legacy Awards** (www.wlaward.org) to those travel tour operators, businesses, organizations, and places that have made a significant contribution to sustainable tourism.

In the U.K., **Tourism Concern** (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) works to reduce social and environmental problems connected to tourism and find ways of improving tourism so that local benefits are increased.

The **Association of British Travel Agents** (ABTA; www.abta.members.org) acts as a focal point for the U.K. travel industry and is one of the leading groups spearheading responsible tourism.

The **Association of Independent Tour Operators** (AITO; www.aito.co.uk) is a group of interesting specialist operators leading the field in making holidays sustainable.

Frommers.com: The Complete Travel Resource

It should go without saying, but we highly recommend **Frommers.com**, voted Best Travel Site by *PC Magazine*. We think you'll find our expert advice and tips; independent reviews of hotels, restaurants, attractions, and preferred shopping and nightlife venues; vacation giveaways; and online booking tool indispensable before, during, and after your travels. We publish the complete contents of over 128 travel guides in our **Destinations** section covering nearly 3,800 places worldwide to help you plan your trip. Each weekday, we publish original articles reporting on **Deals and News** via our free **Frommers.com Newsletter** to help you save time and money and travel smarter. We're betting you'll find our new **Events** listings (<http://events.frommers.com>) an invaluable resource; it's an up-to-the-minute roster of what's happening in cities everywhere—including concerts, festivals, lectures and more. We've also added weekly **podcasts, interactive maps**, and hundreds of new images across the site. Check out our **Travel Talk** area featuring **Message Boards** where you can join in conversations with thousands of fellow Frommer's travelers and post your trip report once you return.

7 Packages for the Independent Traveler

Package tours are simply a way to buy the airfare, accommodations, and other elements of your trip (such as car rentals, airport transfers, and sometimes even activities) at the same time and often at discounted prices.

One good source of package deals is the airlines themselves. Most major airlines offer air/land packages, including **American Airlines Vacations** (☎ 800/321-2121; www.aavacations.com), **Delta Vacations** (☎ 800/654-6559; www.deltavacations.com), **Continental Airlines Vacations** (☎ 800/301-3800; www.covacations.com), and **United Vacations** (☎ 888/854-3899; www.unitedvacations.com). Several big **online travel agencies**—Expedia, Travelocity, Orbitz, Site59, and Lastminute.com—also do a brisk business in packages.

The French Experience, 370 Lexington Ave., Room 511, New York, NY 10017 (☎ 800/283-7262 or 212/986-3800; fax

646/349-3276; www.frenchexperience.com), offers inexpensive tickets to Paris on most major airlines and arranges tours and stays in various types and categories of country inns, hotels, private châteaux, and B&Bs. In addition, it takes reservations for about 38 small hotels in Paris and arranges short-term apartment rentals in the city or farmhouse rentals in the countryside. It also offers all-inclusive packages in Paris and prearranged package tours of various regions in France. Tours can be adapted to suit individual needs.

Travel packages are also listed in the travel section of your local Sunday newspaper. Or check ads in the national travel magazines, such as *Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel*, *Travel + Leisure*, *National Geographic Traveler*, and *Condé Nast Traveler*.

8 Escorted General Interest Tours

Escorted tours are structured group tours, with a group leader. The price usually includes everything from airfare to hotels, meals, tours, admission costs, and local transportation. The two largest tour operators conducting escorted tours of France and Europe are **Globus/Cosmos** (☎ 866/755-8581; www.globusandcosmos.com) and **Trafalgar** (☎ 800/854-0103; www.trafalgartours.com). Both companies have first-class tours that run about \$100 a day and budget tours for even less. The differences are mainly in hotel location and the number of activities. There's little difference in the companies' services, so choose your tour based on the itinerary and preferred date of departure. Brochures are available at travel agencies, and all tours must be booked through travel agents.

Despite the fact that escorted tours require big deposits and pre-determine hotels, restaurants, and itineraries, many people derive security and peace of mind from the structure they offer. Escorted tours—whether they're navigated by bus, motor coach, train, or boat—let travelers sit back and enjoy the trip without having to drive or worry about details. They take you to the maximum number of sights in the minimum amount of time with the least amount of hassle. They're particularly convenient for people with limited mobility and they can be a great way to make new friends.

On the downside, you'll have little opportunity for serendipitous interactions with locals. The tours can be jam-packed with activities, leaving little room for individual sightseeing, whim, or adventure—plus they often focus on the heavily touristed sites, so you miss out on many a lesser-known gem.

FINDING A SPECIALTY PACKAGE What about special-interest tours? For a city as diverse and popular as Paris, there are only a few specialty tours.

One outfit that coordinates hotel stays with major musical events, usually within at least one (and often both) of the city's opera houses, is **Dailey-Thorp Travel**, P.O. Box 670, Big Horn, WY 82833 (☎ **800/998-4677** or 307/673-1555; fax 307/674-7474; www.daileythorp.com). Stays in Paris last between 3 and 7 days and, in many cases, are tied in with opera performances in other cities (usually London, Berlin, or Milan) as well. Expect accommodations in deluxe hotels such as the Grand, the Louvre, or the Scribe, and a staff that has made arrangements for all the nuts and bolts of your arrival in, and artistic exposure to, Paris.

Die-hard tennis fans set their calendars by the events that transpire each year in Paris's Roland Garros stadium at the French Open. If you're unsure about how to match the dates of your visit with tennis tournaments that will be watched around the world, consider the California-based company that specializes in this issue: **Advantage Tennis Tours**, 33 White Sail Drive, Suite 100, Laguna Niguel, CA 92677 (☎ **800/341-8687**; www.advantagetennistours.com).

Packages usually include 5 or 6 nights of hotel accommodations in Paris, 2 or 3 days on Center Court, the organizational skills of a bilingual hostess, and a chance to meet and mingle with tennis fans of many different nationalities during at least one catered luncheon. There will even be an opportunity to grab a racquet and play some tennis on your own, in between bouts of sightseeing. Rates per person, without airfare, begin at \$2,775, double occupancy, depending on your choice of hotel and the duration of your visit.