



# Pack up and go...

Home or abroad, our weekly travel pages have all the best deals and ideas you need for getting away

The famous landmarks in Paris are the icing on the cake — this is a city that requires repeat visits to uncover fully its many beautiful layers, writes MOIRA HANNON.

It's true that your first time in the French capital requires you to taste its world famous attractions.

The Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, Notre Dame, Sacre Coeur, Pompidou, a boat on the Seine.

They all offer a feast for the eyes and are happily devoured by millions of tourists every year.

But if you've ticked these places off your bucket list and think you've "done Paris" — sorry dear reader, but nothing could be further from the truth.

If you were to compare the City of Light to a menu, then you're still on the starter course.

I have visited Paris on perhaps 20 or so occasions, starting out in 1988 as a penniless 17-year-old student and just last month, for the first time since the January 7 Charlie Hebdo massacre.

To be honest, I expected to find the city still heaving with police and a tense atmosphere around the busier tourist spots.

But no, Paris was just as it always was — haughtily beautiful under a cool springtime breeze — and yet there was one major difference.

The hordes of sightseers at every kerb — one of the drawbacks of wandering around the most visited city in the world — were gone.

The streets were emptier than I had ever seen them and I could admire the views unimpeded by large tour groups and selfie-stick wielding couples.

So if you're planning your first — or indeed 20th — visit to Paris, this could be the perfect time to go.

But shhhh — don't tell anyone.

For inspiration, check out some "secret places" for the discerning visitor ...

● **PERE LACHAISE** — *Over a million people are buried here and it's one of the spookiest spots in Paris. Famous residents include Oscar Wilde, Jim Morrison and Edith Piaf. Some of the tombs are bigger than your average semi-d. You could easily spend half a day wandering around this very special place. Metro stations nearby include Philippe Auguste on line 2 but if you want to visit Wilde's grave, use the*

# In Seine

GRAB AN EIFFEL — So much to do and see in Paris



## Top tips

● If you're visiting Paris for the first time, the Louvre will be on your must-visit list (open daily except Tuesday). To save time, log on to [www.louvre.fr/en](http://www.louvre.fr/en) and get familiar with the layout. Choose two or three sections that interest you (the Mona Lisa is signposted La Gioconda) and you will be back out the door in a couple of hours. Prebook a ticket from [paris.conciergerie.com](http://paris.conciergerie.com) or [parisinfo.com](http://parisinfo.com) or from FNAC bookstores and music shops. Enter via the underground carousel shopping centre — there's never much of a queue.

*Gambetta station on line 3. You can never get bored of exploring Pere Lachaise. Haunting and magnificent.*

### ● JARDIN DES ROSIERS - JOSEPH-MIGNERET

— This delightful park is tucked away in the middle of the uber cool Marais district (3rd and 4th arrondissement) on the Right Bank.

Just a few steps off the crowded rue des Rosiers (beside No10) in the heart of the old Jewish quarter, you step down an alleyway and into a hidden gem of tranquillity.

The garden is named after Joseph Migneret, a local teacher dedicated to the Resistance during the war. After 165 of his

Jewish students were deported (only four survived) he started assisting Jews to escape the Nazis, hiding many in his own home.

The perfect place for a picnic (yes, you are allowed to sit on the grass!) grab a falafel from any of the nearby delis and wallow in the serenity and beauty of a park that also contains a small playground.

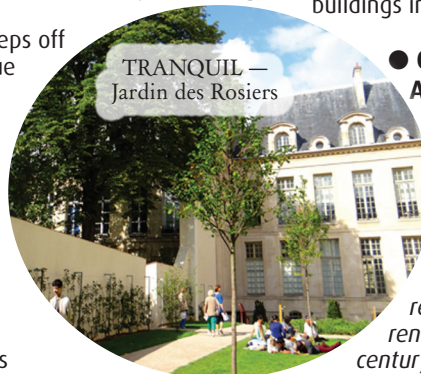
About a ten minute walk further east will take you to the Place Des Vosges, the oldest and arguably the finest square in Paris.

If architecture is your thing, here you can admire some of the most beautiful buildings in the city.

### ● ORANGERIE, MARMOTTAN AND PICASSO MUSEUMS

— *My three favourite museums in Paris. Though not as well known as the D'Orsay or the Louvre, stick them on your list for a rainy day and you won't be disappointed.*

*Musee Picasso recently reopened after a five-year renovation. It is housed in a 17th century mansion known as the Hotel Sale in the Marais and contains over 5,000 works by the world's most expensive artist (Picasso's Women of Algiers recently sold*



TRANQUIL — Jardin des Rosiers

# lovely

## Yummy advice

● Foodies will love the website [parisbymouth.com](http://parisbymouth.com) — it has special food maps outlining such delights as the Best Baguettes, Lemon Tarts and Croissants in Paris. They also list all the upcoming food and wine events plus restaurant reviews and neighbourhood eating out guides.



at auction for €150m).

You can also see the artist's own private collection on the upper floor.

Admission is €12, for opening hours etc see [www.museepicassoparis.fr/en/](http://www.museepicassoparis.fr/en/)

The main attractions in both Musee Marmottan ([www.marmottan.fr/uk/](http://www.marmottan.fr/uk/)) and L'Orangerie ([www.musee-orangerie.fr](http://www.musee-orangerie.fr)) are Monet's Water Lilies.

Marmottan (€11 admission, the nearest metro is La Muette) is also home to a wonderful selection of impressionist paintings including Manet, Sisley and Morisot.

Afterwards, wander around the Jardins du Ranelagh, an oasis of greenery filled with statues and all types of beautiful trees.

Musee de l'Orangerie (€9 admission, closed Tuesdays) is located just steps from the Louvre (skip the queues with a museum pass, see our top tip panel) and this is the best place to admire Les Nymphéas, the large Monet water lily murals.

● **PANTHEON** — This giant mausoleum with its massive portico of Corinthian



THE THINKER — Musee Rodin

columns looks grandly down on the Left Bank. Among those buried in its crypts are Voltaire, Rousseau, Victor Hugo, Émile Zola, Jean Moulin, Louis Braille, Jean Jaurès and Marie Curie.

The Pantheon (€7 admission, see [www.pantheonparis.com/](http://www.pantheonparis.com/)) is currently undergoing a partial renovation and you can no longer see Foucault's pendulum but its subterranean splendour is not to be missed. On the subject of dead famous people, Les Invalides (near the

Eiffel Tower in the 16th arrondissement) is another grande dome and the burial place of Napoleon Bonaparte. Military buffs will be in heaven with its vast collection of weaponry. Entry €9.50, [www.musee-armee.fr/en/english-version.html](http://www.musee-armee.fr/en/english-version.html)

● **MUSEE RODIN** — Close to Invalides at Metro Varenne, this museum is home to sculptor Augustin Rodin's genius creations. The three acres of gardens are probably the most romantic in Paris and contain his most famous works including *The Thinker* and *The Gates of Hell*, while inside you will be stunned by the beauty of my favourite

What you really need in Paris is a comfortable bed to collapse into after a hard day's sightseeing. I found just that and more in the Legend Hotel on the Rue de Rennes (a great shopping street) on the Left Bank, close to the Luxembourg Gardens and the buzz of St Germain de Pres.

It's cool and contemporary with some cute touches like an honesty bar if you fancy a tippie.

My cosy room came with an ultra-powerful ensuite shower, mini-bar and enough pillows to open my own shop.

Breakfast included a naughty selection of delicious chocolate tartes as well as the usual croissants, cereals etc and the staff are very friendly.

Bonus points for the two large cinemas just steps away at Montparnasse.

Check out [www.legendhotelparis.com](http://www.legendhotelparis.com)

## WHERE TO STAY

[legendhotelparis.com](http://legendhotelparis.com), prices from around €200 per room per night but they have package deals and discounts if you book well in advance. Email [contact@legendhotelparis.com](mailto:contact@legendhotelparis.com) for offers.

The Legend is part of the Elegancia group, for more see [www.elegancia-hotels.com](http://www.elegancia-hotels.com)

**GETTING THERE:** There is a shuttle bus to Montparnasse Station, about a five minute walk from the hotel, direct from Charles de Gaulle airport. Log on to <http://en.lescarsairfrance.com>



STYLISH — The lobby of the Legend Hotel and a bedroom



## MONEY SAVER

■ The Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau has fantastic money saving offers such as the Paris City Pass, which includes all transport plus discounts on museum admissions, from €32 for a two day pass. Their site also has advice on everything from family entertainment to travelling with a disability. See [parisinfo.com](http://parisinfo.com)

Rodin sculpture, *The Kiss*. Entry €9, closed Monday, see [www.musee-rodin.fr/en](http://www.musee-rodin.fr/en)

● **CATACOMBS** — There is no getting away from skeletons in Paris but this really is one of the most fascinating sites in town. Just steps from Metro Denfert-Rochereau lies an ossuary containing six million bones from various Parisian cemeteries.

Skulls surround you as you walk through the 1.7km labyrinth of tunnels (entry €8, see [www.catacombes.paris.fr/en/homepage-catacombs-official-website](http://www.catacombes.paris.fr/en/homepage-catacombs-official-website))

● **SAINTE CHAPELLE** — Built in the 12th century, this Gothic chapel contains one of the most complete and remarkable sets of stained glass of this era (go up the narrow staircase to see them properly). A masterpiece of religious architecture. Entry €8.50, see [www.sainte-chapelle.monuments-nationaux.fr/](http://www.sainte-chapelle.monuments-nationaux.fr/) — the nearest Metro is Cite on line 4.

● **GETTING THERE:** Ryanair.com and Airlingus.com fly direct to Paris daily from several Irish airports. Book well in advance for the best deals.

For more information on all there is to see and do in Paris right now, check out [www.parisinfo.com](http://www.parisinfo.com)