

Paris Délices
plus
Paris Tips

by Christine Piccin

The French have an affinity for fine food and wine which some attribute to a mysterious “foodie” gene inherited by every *petit Français* and *petite Française*. Since I wasn’t born French, I’m hoping, instead, that their culinary *savoir-faire* is a learned behavior and that maybe some of it will rub off on me. Each time I visit Paris I try to absorb as much French culinary style as possible, I shop the top foodie haunts, and return home with more goodies than I can carry.

Come with me to the treasure spots I’ve discovered, where you’ll find the goods to imbue your kitchen with Parisian flair. A French bistro tray, a fine linen tablecloth, a copper *sauteuse* -- you’ll be well on your way to garnering a bit of your own French culinary chic.

First, “The First” then “The Second” (1st and 2nd arrondissements)

The first of Paris’ 20 city districts (*arrondissements*) includes the venerable Les Halles neighborhood which, for centuries, was the site of one of Paris’ most important food and vegetable markets. The wholesale food market for the restaurant trade has been relocated south of the city in a sprawling complex called Rungis, but a multitude of establishments dedicated to fine food, wine, and cookery have sprung up in its place.

A good place to start is the pedestrian market street, **Rue Montorgueil**. Cobblestone pavers have been re-laid to recreate the village feel of yesteryear, and this lively lane is now lined with little bistros and gourmet food purveyors. Give in to the temptation to sample a pastry, any one, at **Stohrer** (51, rue Montorgueil).

Nearby is **Déhillerin** (18, rue Coquillère, closed Sundays), a Les Halles cookware supplier to restaurants trade that is also open to the public. This cavernous bazaar houses a cook’s treasure trove, with everything stacked to the rafters on workmanlike, wooden shelves. Gleaming copper pots made in Normandy are a specialty, but you can buy almost any kitchen knife or hand tool imaginable (all heaped in row-upon-row of loaf pans). There are stock pots, crepe pans, charlotte tins, whisks, and more, in sizes from minuscule to gargantuan. Don’t forget to go downstairs!

To continue shopping where Parisian chefs shop, meander over to Rue Montmartre. **M.O.R.A.** is at 13, rue Montmartre and stocks stainless steel utensils and tabletop items, plus a whole room of baking and pastry supplies. They even have *fèves*, the tiny collectible porcelain figurines that are baked into Three Kings cakes (*galettes des rois*). **La Bovida** is not far, at number 36, and **A. Simon** is at number 48. Whether you’re shopping for a French restaurant chalkboard, sturdy cotton towels, Provençal olive oil bottles, or reasonably-priced knives, you’ll find it at one of these shops. Next door to La Bovida, take a peek inside the sleek **Comptoir de la Gastronomie** for a tempting selection of sausages, ham, foie gras, dried mushrooms, wine, and more. There is also a small chic restaurant in this gorgeous 1894 Art Nouveau building.

More home cook-oriented is **La Vaissellerie** (332, rue St-Honoré, one of six outlets in Paris), an over-stuffed kitchen toy-box whose specialties are pristine white porcelain and shiny stainless steel gadgets. While you may not want to carry home dinner service for eight (you will be tempted by the prices), it won’t be hard to find a kitchen toy here that you can’t live without. **Kitchen Bazaar** (50, rue Croix des Petits Champs) is a more spacious, tastefully merchandised store, filled with irresistible kitchen baubles. There are four other Kitchen Bazaar stores in Paris, all open Monday-Saturday.

Next, head in the direction of the serene Jardin du Palais Royale, taking a stroll through the handsomely restored **Galerie Vivienne** (between rue Vivienne and rue de la Banque). This 1823 shopping arcade, of which there are numerous examples in Paris (some called *galeries*, others called *passages couverts*--‘covered passages’) allowed 19th-century bourgeoisie to shop within its tranquil confines without worrying about weather, mucky streets, or traffic (there were no sidewalks then). Besides the pretty mosaic tile floors and the magnificent glass and ironwork ceilings, the manicured wine cellar and shop **L. LeGrand Filles & Fils** (12, Galerie Vivienne and 1, rue de la Banque) is worth a visit. Sip a glass of sherry at the wine bar, browse books and shimmering glassware in their annex across the *galerie*, or nibble your way through a delectable selection of foods and confections in their charming period *épicerie*.

Spicing up Paris (3rd and 4th arrondissements)

Izraël (30, rue Francois-Miron) is a veritable “Ali Baba’s cave” of goodies. Crammed floor to ceiling, this 70-year-old establishment offers hundreds of spices, including its own spice blends. There are also gourmet foods like violet-colored, grape-infused French mustard from Brive-la-Gaillarde, and dried fruits, nuts, grains, and flours sold from bulging sacks.

Another shop, **Goumanyat & Son Royaume** (3, rue Dupuis, open 2-7 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday) is fancifully named for the imaginary king of an imaginary kingdom, and is dedicated to the pleasure of taste. The boutique houses a stylish spice shop on the ground floor with its fragrant goods stored in Chinese apothecary cabinets, a spice “scent bar” to tantalize the olfactory, and a bevy of beautiful foods: dried fruits, crystallized flowers, vanilla beans, exotic oils, rose-scented syrups, and the shop’s *raison d’être*, saffron. There’s a cellar full of out-of-the-ordinary wines and spirits and, upstairs, a designer clothing boutique -- everything you need to outfit the perfect party under one roof! Goumanyat used to be the only store in Paris that closes up for the saffron harvest in early November; now their closure falls in August.

A bonus: just a few blocks away, on rue de Bretagne, is the **Marché des Enfants Rouges**, open every day except Monday. This small *marché couvert* or *covered market* is the oldest farmer’s marketplace in Paris (c. 1615), and was restored in 2001 to its former glory.

L’Ile Saint-Louis (4th arrondissement)

Monique Wells and her husband, Tom Reeves, operate a personalized tour and itinerary service called Discover Paris! Whether you’re yearning for a long weekend filled with museums and fine dining, or a walking itinerary of parks and gardens, the pair will tailor your visit to suit your desires, and the amount of time you have. I requested “two hours in a gourmet ghetto.”

While Place de la Madeleine might spring to mind, Wells, herself a cookbook author, took me to tiny Ile Saint-Louis, in the heart of Paris and in the middle of the Seine. The island’s main street, **rue Saint-Louis-en-l’Ile**, is hardly a ghetto, but a delightfully tranquil cobblestone lane brimming with goodie-packed shops.

My visit began at a boutique filled with La Fite Foie Gras and ended at Gourmet Calixte, famous for its *mille feuilles* pastries—what we call “Napoleons” (for Wells, the best in Paris). I sampled silky olive oils and pungent French cheeses, and visited boutiques specializing in tea, wine, bread, pastries, **Berthillon ice cream** (29, rue Saint-Louis-en-l’Ile), and chocolate. With her walking tour itineraries Wells supplies detailed maps, historical tidbits, and a wealth of tips that come from having called Paris home for many years. For example, “Go very early to climb the tower of Notre Dame,” she confides, “then spend an hour or two on Ile Saint-Louis.” (For more information, visit www.discoverparis.net.)

Gardens and gourmands (5th and 6th arrondissements)

If your travels take you to the Jardin des Plantes, or the lovely Luxembourg Gardens, take a walk down the market street, **Rue Mouffetard**, which is midway between the two. This meandering cobblestone lane, considered the oldest street in Paris, is lined with oodles of intimate food shops. In the morning, umbrellas go up and a bounty of wonderful things -- fruits and vegetables, cheeses, meats, ice cream and more -- spills out into the street. **Oliviers & Co.** (128, rue Mouffetard, plus eight other boutiques in Paris) offers fine Mediterranean olive oils and olive products, plus kitchenware and linens. My favorite, though, is **La Tuile à Loup** at 35, rue Daubenton, just off rue Mouffetard. This boutique is crammed with pottery and linens from all over France, including Quimper pottery from Brittany and sunny Provençal pottery designs. Open Monday afternoon, Tuesday-Saturday all day.

To fortify yourself after your park walk, step into **Dalloyau** at 2, place Edmund-Rostand, one of several Dalloyau pastry shop-tea salons in Paris. Tempting pastries, including my favorite- sugar-crusted *cannelés*- are available morning till evening, and a more substantial menu is served on the upstairs terrace facing the Luxembourg garden.

A bit farther out is **Bistrots d’Autrefois** (135bis boulevard du Montparnasse, open afternoons only), a store specializing in period zinc-topped bars, tables and chairs, plus glassware, plates, lamps to ship home-- everything you need to create your own turn-of-the-20th-century Paris bistro *chez vous*.

Around St. Germain (6th and 7th arrondissements)

The neighborhood around the St. Germain des Prés church is full of chic art galleries, cozy restaurants, and postage stamp-sized shops—one of my favorite neighborhoods to wander. **Boutique Le Flore** (26, rue Saint-Benoit) is one of those tiny shops, peddling jaunty green and white café tableware, towels, and aprons just like they use in the celebrated **Café Le Flore** down the street. **La Maison Ivre** (38, rue Jacob) is one of my favorite shops: a jewel box filled with color. There are marvelous linens as well as crockery and art pieces from French regional artisan potters in designs both traditional and playfully modern. Up the street at 12, rue Jacob (at the back of the courtyard) is **Tomat's Epicerie**, a spice shop where you can purchase **Huilerie J. LeBlanc's** amazing nut oils. You think walnut oil is great? Wait till you taste LeBlanc's pistachio oil-- there's nothing like it.

If shopping has whetted your appetite, there's a **Ladurée** tea salon-pastry shop (one of several in Paris) at 21, rue Bonaparte. The dining room is decorated like a tropical garden and is a lovely spot for breakfast or tea. Try one of Ladurée's famous buttery croissants or chocolate macaroons --light-as-air meringue cookie sandwiches filled with dreamy chocolate cream -- or my favorite macaroon flavor, cassis-violet. If it's deep, dark chocolates you fancy, those at nearby **Debaue et Gallais** (30, rue de Saint-Pères) are surely worth their weight in euros. This exquisite Old World candy shop's specialty is an almond *praliné croquante*, but I fell in love with the bittersweet chocolate *cannelé*, with a filling that's like a cross between creamy caramel and crème brûlée. Any confessed foodie must also stop in at **Poilâne** (8, rue du Cherche Midi) where master baker Lionel Poilâne (who passed away in 2002) created the most famous sourdough bread in France. Poilâne's not-too-sweet caramelized apple tartlet will tide you over nicely until dinner.

Don't leave the neighborhood until you've visited **Bon Marché** (38, rue de Sèvres), one of my favorite Parisian department stores for things culinary. The store's kitchen department in **Building 1** is loaded with a multitude of must-haves: cook's tools, porcelain, and gorgeous linens. And you can't beat the wealth of gourmet goodies from fresh tuna to truffle oil, and great foodie gifts and souvenirs, available in the **Grande Épicerie de Paris** in **Bon Marché's Building 2**.

Casse-croûte—a snack (7th arrondissement)

Located between the Eiffel Tower and Napoleon's tomb is the pristine chocolate shop of **Michel Chaudun** (149, rue de l'Université) Chaudun's caramel, honey, and basil-scented truffles are amazing. Not far away, the baker Jean-Luc Poujauran was known for his charming, old-fashioned pastry shop at 20, rue Jean Nicot. It now belongs to **Stéphane Secco**, still great, according to my friend Lynn who has an apartment around the corner.

Temples to gastronomy (8th and 9th arrondissements)

Gourmets flock to Place de la Madeleine. Nowhere else are there so many upper-crust establishments consecrated to fine food and wine than around that imposing church built to look like a Greek temple. The first temple to "all things *culinaire*" is **Hédiard**, with its beautiful selection of teas (like green sencha tea scented with cherry), and its walk-through glass wine cellar. Exotic foods abound; there is even a glass case stuffed with every gem-like glacéed fruit imaginable. **Fauchon** is on the opposite corner, where you'll find the wine cellar downstairs, tea and spices upstairs. Are all the other delicacies are sold on the main level, where I once succumbed to the purchase of some very special jelly from Bar-le-Duc, a French delicacy made from white currants whose miniscule seeds are fastidiously plucked out with a quill. Fauchon's restaurant, take-out counter, and pastry shop have moved into sleek digs across the street. Also on the Place de la Madeleine, you'll find **Caviar Kaspia**, selling caviar and its accoutrements, and **Maison de la Truffe**, for truffles and more.

On the far side of the Madeleine church, **Maison de Miel** (24, rue Vignon) is a sweetly scented boutique with winsome bumblebee tiles on the floor. There are dozens of types honey to taste -- from the

dark, intense fir tree honey, to delicate lavender -- as well as honeycomb and honey cakes. While you're in the area, stop in at **Lafayette Gourmet**, the ultra-ritzy grocery store complete with fashionable wine bar; it's on the first floor of the elegant **Galeries Lafayette** department store (40, boulevard Haussmann).

If you're heading towards Place de la Concorde from the Madeleine and would like a pick-me-up, there are two tempting tea salons on rue Royale: opulent, classically appointed **Ladurée** at number 16, and **Bernardaud** located at number 11, tucked behind the Bernardaud china shop at the back an alley called the Galerie Royale. With its plum-hued velvet chairs and moss green color scheme, this is a serene, sophisticated spot for a *rafraichi*, Parisian coffee or hot chocolate finished with a scoop of vanilla ice-cream!

To market, to market (11th arrondissement)

Not far from the Seine, beginning at Place de la Bastille, is one of Paris' **biggest and best outdoor markets**. On Thursdays and Sundays hundreds of vendors line the fountain-decorated **Boulevard Richard-Lenoir** under a canopy of shade trees. Market offerings include meat, fish, wine, fruits, vegetables and flowers, but also prepared foods like salmon quiches, pâtés, sausages, and artisan bread. There are also kitchen gadgets and tablecloths in Provençal motifs. The market is a great place to gather food for your flight or drive home, as I did, so I could enjoy one final, perfect French picnic.

Montmartre - Sacre Coeur (18th arrondissement)

Room for Dessert cookbook author David Lebovitz leads bakery and chocolate tours in France. When I asked about his favorite candy shop (confiserie) in Paris, he replied without hesitation: Denise Acabo's **A l'Etoile d'Or** (30, rue Fontaine). Acabo carries handmade chocolates from all over France, and "the best caramels in the world," says Lebovitz. Though technically in the 9th arrondissement, this eclectic and delightful shop is just down the street from the Moulin Rouge so you can stop in for provisions before you climb up to Sacre Coeur, or for a treat on your way back down.

As you wind through the streets that lace this hilly neighborhood around the Sacre Coeur church, pass by **Clos Montmartre** (corner of rue des Saules and rue Saint-Vincent), the most famous half-acre of wine-producing vines in the city of Paris, right across the street from the **Lapin Agile**. Proceeds from sales of the wine, a gamay variety called *morgon*, benefit the neighborhood's poor. For a break, indulge yourself at **La Butte Glacée** (just off the main square, Place du Têtre, on rue de Norvins) for a sweet crepe, ice-cream, or litchi sorbet to savor as you saunter down Paris' cobblestone lanes.

A Handful of Hotels I Like

Left Bank

Hôtel des Grandes Ecoles

75, rue du Cardinal Lemoine, 5th arrondissement

www.hotel-grandes-ecoles.com

51 rooms, traditional small hotel with country charm, tiny rooms but nice courtyard

rates: €118-145

Hôtel Résidence Henri IV

50, rue des Bernardins, 5th arrondissement

<http://www.residencehenri4.com>

lovely, large rooms with kitchenettes, located in a quiet street around the corner from the Cluny museum
internet rates from €130

Hotel du Pantheon

19, Place du Panthéon, 5th arrondissement

www.hoteldupantheon.com

charmingly decorated in French Provincial style--part of a group of several recently renovated hotels, each with its own lovely style, nice bathrooms

internet rates from €130—definitely pay a little extra for a room that looks out over the Pantheon!

Hotel Le Marquis Eiffel

15 Rue Dupleix, Paris, 15th arrondissement

<http://en.lemarquisparis.com/>

rooms are large for Paris, decorated modern/chic, in a quiet street close to the Eiffel Tower

rates: €140+

Hôtel Montalembert

3, rue de Montalembert, 7th arrondissement

www.montalembert.com

56 rooms, stylish, contemporary boutique hotel, next door to Joël Robuchon's L'Atelier

rates: €250+

Right Bank

Trocadero Le Dokhan's

117, rue Lauriston, 16th arrondissement

www.dokhan.paris.radissonas.com/

Classically lovely: 45 rooms in an 18th-century former private residence, with a champagne bar

rates: €250+

Hôtel Ambassador

16, Boulevard Haussman, 9th arrondissement

www.hotelambassador-paris.com

300 rooms, splendidly redecorated historic building with restaurant

rates: €300+

Hôtel de Crillon

Place de la Concorde, 8th arrondissement

www.crillon.com

Pricy but gorgeous: 147 elegant rooms in a sumptuous Louis XV palace with an amazing Michelin-starred restaurant

rack rates: €500+

Dining in Paris

Before I go to Paris, I check online for the latest from the New York Times, Bon Appetit, Food & Wine, and Travel+Leisure—all great sources.

The restaurants pictured in my slides

L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon, 5 Rue de Montalembert, off rue Saint-Germain

Le Train Bleu The stunning rococo Belle Epoque restaurant in the Gare du Lyon, 12th arrondissement

Best Bistros in Paris, from Saveur, Food and Wine, and NYT:

<http://www.saveur.com/article/Travels/The-23-Best-Bistros-in-Paris>

<http://travel.nytimes.com/2011/04/03/travel/03Choice.html?emc=eta1>

<http://www.foodandwine.com/articles/paris-travel-guide-paris-restaurants>

Paris wine bars:

<http://www.foodandwine.com/articles/paris-travel-guide-paris-wine-bars>

<http://www.foodandwine.com/articles/best-paris-wine-bars>

<http://www.foodandwine.com/articles/paris-old-school-and-new-wine-bars>

<http://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/4-new-paris-wine-bars/1>

Paris markets -- summaries of the best:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2008/nov/28/paris-markets-shopping-trips-france?page=all>

http://www.discoverfrance.net/France/Paris/Shopping/Paris_markets.shtml

http://www.yourgreatdaysinparis.com/po_takeparispersonally.htm

Bakeries, chocolate shops, more:

<http://www.foodandwine.com/articles/paris-travel-guide-best-new-paris-restaurants-bakeries-wine-bars-and-more>

Some ideas for vegetarian food in Paris

<http://www.davidlebovitz.com/2008/04/vegetarian-rest-1/>

A few restaurants and bistros I really like and recommend (in no particular order)

Angelina, 226, rue de Rivoli, 1st arrondissement. Classic 1900's décor, famous thick and creamy hot chocolate, pastries, plus food.

L'Ecluse Bar à Vin, five of them in Paris including Place de la Madeleine, classic wine bar feel with good wines reasonably priced, all open 7/7 from 8:30 AM till the wee hours. When almost all other wine bars are closed, e.g. on Sundays, L'Ecluse is open.

Nicolas Bar à Vin, they're all over Paris and now Great Britain, even Russia. Opened in 1822 in Paris, this is the wine bar favored by Julia Child when she lived in Paris.

Le Dôme, and **Bistrot du Dôme**, 108b, rue de Montparnasse, corner rue Delambre-14th arrondissement, open daily. Le Dôme is classic Parisian in style, known for its bounteous shellfish platters; the Bistrot across the street is more casual but, as the French say, "*correcte*," and less expensive. Great tile murals.

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L'Ecailler du Bistrot, 22, rue Paul Bert, 11th arrondissement. (Closed Sun-Mon) Turn-of-the-century, old-style seafood bistro harkens back to decades past. More casual than Le Dome, with a hustling staff and the freshest fish and seafood platters. 55€ everything-lobster *menu!*

Bistro Paul Bert, 18 rue Paul Bert, 11th arrondissement. (closed Sun-Mon). Same owner as L'Ecailler (above) and right next door, with the same classic charming bistro feel and excellent food.

Le Baratin, 3 rue Jouye Rouve, 20th arrondissement (lunch and dinner daily, no lunch on Saturdays, reservation recommended). Simple, classic French dishes expertly done, lively locals spot, very casual and lively, and off the beaten track.

L'Epigramme, 9, rue l'Eperon, 6th arrondissement (closed Sun-Mon). Just off Rue St. Michel, tiny, very accommodating, modern, inspired flavors on the chalkboard menu, gorgeous presentations.

L'Epi Dupin, 11, rue Dupin-6th arrondissement, near Bon Marché department store (closed weekends and Monday lunch). Cute, cozy, and the wonderful food of François Pasteau.

Au Bon Accueil, 14, rue Montessuy-7th arrondissement (open weekdays + Saturday night). Small restaurant with great food plus a stellar view of the Eiffel Tower from the sidewalk tables.

Jadis, 208 Rue Croix Nivert, 15th arrondissement. Neighborhood bistro decorated with charming café curtains, serving French country classics rendered deliciously modern, and creatively presented. Closed weekends.

Bistro d'Hubert, 41, rue Pasteur, 15th arrondissement. Charming restaurant with open kitchen and delicious, creative food.

Coupe Chou, 9-11, rue de Lanneau, 5th arrondissement. Tucked away in two 17th century buildings in a small street, the restaurant offers straightforward traditional French cuisine in several well patina-ed dining rooms linked by tiny stairways. History oozes from this place. Go if only for the ambiance.

Le Passage, 18 passage de la Bonne-Graine, 11th arrondissement. Off the beaten track tucked into an alley. Has changed hands since Patricia Wells first recommended it, but maintains its perfect Parisian brasserie ambiance, and serves the best andouillette sausages I've ever had.

Le Severo, 8 rue des Plantes, 14th arrondissement (open M-F, lunch and dinner, closed weekends). Tiny old bar-turned restaurant with a wall of black boards and perfectly cooked beef (bleu or rare!). Great steak-frites and ris de veau, interesting wine list. Service can be brusque but adds to the ambiance!

Rino, 46 rue Trousseau, 11th arrondissement (dinner Tues-Sat, lunch Fr-Sat.) 5 or 7-course fixed price menus offer finely done, creative cuisine in a tiny, lively space. Go if you like to surprise your palate!

Le Christine, 1 rue Christine, 6th arrondissement (lunch M-F, dinner daily). A pleasant find in a highly-touristy part of Paris. Old stone walls contrast with clean, modern décor, excellent service and reasonably priced, really good food.

Bakeries...Several well-known, top-notch Parisian bakeries and pastry shops have sprouted mini-chains in Paris, and beyond. If you see a branch of **Secco**, **Paul**, **Gérard Mulot**, **Ladurée**, **Hermé**, or **Le Nôtre**, don't hesitate! They're all good, and beautiful. Also, look for window stickers that say "Meilleur Ouvrier de France", which means the baker or pastry maker has won a national prize for their specialties.

These tips will make your Paris travel much simpler:

Credit and bank cards: I've never encountered a problem using my American credit card in restaurants or stores, or my American ATM card at bank ATM machines (though your pin number should be four digits only).

American credit cards and ATM cards (without a microchip on the front like French cards have) don't work in many of the freestanding electronic machines, though -- think **payphones, metro and train station ticket machines, street parking ticket machines, and freeway toll stations**. You have to go to a staffed toll booth, counter or window to use your credit card, where there will be no problem.

Do let your bank know you'll be traveling so you don't trigger credit card security, which scans for unusual card usage and may put a hold on your card if you travel outside your home area. I take my bank card's international toll-free number with me just in case a hold is placed on my card—I write it on the photocopy of my passport that I keep in my luggage. I take a second credit card with me in case a hold is placed on the first card and I'm unable to deal with it expeditiously.

Driving in Paris? Parking machines for street parking in Paris require "parking cards" which are available at all "*tabacs*" (newspaper/cigarette shops) in €10 or €30 increments. (Parking machines do not accept money or regular credit cards.) Parking is paid Monday-Saturday, 9 am-7 pm. Overnight and on Sundays street parking is free. It's also free on public holidays, and in August. Your hotel will charge for parking—unless, it's August, it's usually worth it!

Metro savoir-faire: Individual metro tickets are €1.60. If you think you'll take the metro fewer than 6 times a day, a *carnet* (a pack of ten tickets) is your best bet (11.40€).

You can buy unlimited-use metro cards (called *Carte Orange* or *Navigo Découverte* cards) for around 22€ per week at ticket windows of main metro stations. The weekly pass is good Monday-Sunday and is the best value if you're staying a week. They're also available by month. You'll need a passport-style photo 3cm high x 2.5 cm wide. Bring one that you've cut to size at home, or have one taken in the photo booth in one of the larger metro stations.

Another metro alternative is a *Paris Visite* card, which is good for 1, 2, 3, or 5 days, the timing beginning with the first time you use it. That would make more sense if you arrive in Paris midweek and are planning to use the metro a lot. The cards run €8-28, an average of €7-8 per day for unlimited use.

Note: some smaller metro stations don't have staffed ticket windows, only those automatic ticket machines. The machines accept Euros, or credit cards with microchips on them. You cannot use American credit cards in those machines so plan to have Euros, or go to a ticket window in larger metro stations if you want to use your credit card.

You can buy Paris museum passes online, at the airport, or at the museums themselves. 2-day, 4-day and 6-day passes are 35, 50, and 65 € respectively — good for unlimited visits to around 60 Paris museums; no waiting in lines, either. When you get to the museum, locate the entrance reserved for pass-holders and zip past the unprepared! Just that benefit makes it worthwhile. (P.S. 10 of Paris' smaller municipal museums are free, including the Carnavalet and the Petit Palais.)

Try Paris museums by night: d'Orsay is open Thursday nights and the Louvre on Wednesdays and Fridays. During the summer, Sainte Chappelle is open on Wednesday nights, too and a couple times during the year, some museums are open all night long! It's a great way to avoid crowds and the museums are exceptionally peaceful. Make your dinner reservation for afterward!

For detailed address info, nearest metro stations, and hours of operation for all Paris museums, or to buy the museum pass, visit www.parismuseumpass.com. This is part of the bigger Paris tourist office website, www.Parisinfo.com. Both sites are available in an English version.

Cheese for the road: You can bring home raw milk cheese purchased in France if it has been aged over 60 days, which means firm cheeses like Comté and Roquefort —but not soft cheeses like fresh goat cheese, Camembert or Brie. Just ask at the cheese shop if you're not sure which are aged. Some cheese shops will vacuum-package your purchases; just keep them refrigerated (mini-bar!) or on ice until you fly home. When vacuum-packaging wasn't available, I've carried cheese home well-wrapped then placed inside plastic containers.

No meat products may be brought into the US. Used to be canned pâtés and the like were ok, but no more...mad cow disease, avian flu, etc., have taken care of that. They could be taken from you at US Customs. ☹

I hope these tips I've gathered over years of traveling to Paris are helpful. Please feel free to get in touch if you have questions, or if you have great finds of your own to share!

Bon voyage!

Christine