

Paris on the Cheap

Written by Jill Kerr Tepe

Tuesday, 21 February 2012 00:00 - Last Updated Tuesday, 21 February 2012 13:52

Paris: the City of Lights, French architecture, Tour de Eiffel, and the ever-present French baguette.



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Who knew such a conglomeration of all things perfect in the world could cost so much? For those big-city dwellers, like New Yorkers, who are accustomed to forking over \$15 for a beer, Paris may seem the norm. But for the rest of the world, once you pay to arrive in old Paris and shell out hundreds a night for a small and mediocre hotel room, all you want is a glass of vino or local brew. Is it too much to ask that you shouldn't have to take out a second mortgage to be able to have a meal and a drink?

I'm not complaining, because I love this city. I love its ethereally beautiful buildings, landmarks, endless cafés and brasseries, and the people. Yes, I said the people. Parisians, contrary to popular belief, are actually very nice individuals. They keep to themselves, which is why they may not acknowledge you on the street, but if addressed, they will attempt to communicate with you in a friendly and helpful way. And I love their effortlessly unkempt style. The flyaway dark curly hair, the barely-there chic makeup, and the dark clothing that somehow never seems dull. Yes, J'adore Paris.

My husband Nick and I attempted to find ways to lessen the squeeze on our pocket book but still allow us to live it up -- you're supposed to be on vacation after all! And to our surprise, there was plenty to discover in that city that costs nothing or next-to-nothing to enjoy.

{vimeo}37177342{/vimeo}

[On an iPhone? View Jill's Paris video at: http://vimeo.com/37177342](http://vimeo.com/37177342)

Walk the Famous Champs-Élysées and Don't Stop

- From where ever you're staying, take the subway (one of the most thorough and well-connected metro systems in the world) to the [Arc de Triomphe](#) . Skip paying to go up inside of the arch (really, who cares?), and instead, walk from there straight down the [Avenue des Champs-Élysées](#) . This beautiful tree-lined boulevard boasts boutiques and shopping galore. So prepare to feast your eyes and leave your wallet in place, as we're on a budget here. But a little window shopping never hurt anyone, did it? I confess I didn't totally stick to the plan as I have a weakness for party dresses and snagged a well-priced one from Zara. (*"Oh this old thing? It's nothing, just something I picked up on the Champs-Élysées in Paris"*).
- Once the concentration of stores decreases, continue walking on past great landmarks: [The Grand Palais](#) , catch a glimpse of the gold dome of [Hôtel des Invalides](#) (where Napoleon is buried), and through the [Place de la Concorde](#) -- a fabulous square featuring a fountain, obelisk and neoclassical buildings. This was also the famed spot where the guillotine claimed the victims of the revolution, including Marie Antoinette. It is a great venue for photos as the Eiffel Tower is clearly visible from here as well.
- Continue on, leisurely strolling through the [Tuileries Garden](#) and nearly up to the [Musée du Louvre](#) . Just on the edge of the garden, near the circular fountain out in front of the Louvre, there are a

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few park cafés that sell beer, wine, hot sandwiches and desserts. Grab a drink (I chose a delicious hot mulled red wine with cinnamon one day, and the local brew

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the next day) and a snack to go (I highly recommend the crêpes nutella!). Feel free to plop down in a green chair in front of the fountain facing the Louvre. You might have a few pesky birds approach you, but I challenge anyone to find a more perfect perch for an afternoon snack. Nick and I partook in this ritual two days in a row, as there's hardly a prettier setting than the Louvre exterior. And another great thing about Paris is, you can walk around with alcohol, so you can purchase a bottle of wine from a store and bring it to any park or bench for your own picnic. You can really save a load of cash by opting for this over sitting in a café every time.



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