



5-days in
Paris

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BONJOUR

I am Erika, a gal who moved to Paris when I was 15 years old. I've lived here for more than a decade, and I still discover new corners, new flavors, new light.

The tourists see the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre queue, the overpriced crepes near Sacre-Coeur.

But the real Paris is in the back streets of the Marais at golden hour, in the first bite of a croissant still warm from the oven, in the silence of a courtyard you stumbled into by accident.

This guide is everything I'd tell a friend visiting for the first time. Five days, no fluff, no tourist traps. Just the Paris I know and love, laid out day by day so you can spend less time planning and more time living it.

A quick word about me: I'm a photographer, and I've shot hundreds of sessions in Paris. I know how much a great photo changes the way you remember a trip. Together with my partner Basile, we built Cheese; an app that connects travelers with talented local photographers. Think of it as the Airbnb of photography: you browse, you book, you show up, and you walk away with photos that actually look like you had the time of your life.

You'll find a photography moment woven into this guide. It's optional, of course. But trust me: six months from now, you won't remember the exact taste of that croissant. You will remember how Paris made you feel, but only if you capture it.

Let's begin.



DAY 1

9:30 am

Notre Dame - Start your trip with the heart of Paris. Book **free tickets** on notredamedeparis.fr in advance to skip the 1-2 hour queue.

The cathedral was restored after the 2019 fire and is in the best condition it's been in for centuries. The new interior lighting is breathtaking. Allow about an hour inside.



10:30 am

Sainte-Chapelle - A 10-minute walk from Notre-Dame. Most visitors skip this, which is a mistake. The stained glass here is more spectacular than Notre-Dame's. Visit on a sunny day if possible: the light flooding through 1,113 panels is genuinely one of the most beautiful things you'll see in Paris. Book timed tickets online.

12:00 pm

Cross to the Left Bank for Lunch - Walk across the Pont Saint-Michel to the Left Bank. You're now in Saint-Germain-des-Pres, the literary and intellectual heart of Paris. Find a bistro with a terrace on one of the side streets off Boulevard Saint-Germain. Order the *formule du jour* and a glass of wine. Watch the neighbourhood go about its day.

2:00 pm

Wander Saint-Germain-des-Pres - This is one of the most elegant neighbourhoods in Paris. Browse the bookshops, antique dealers, and small galleries along Rue de Seine and Rue Jacob. Peek into the courtyard of the Ecole des Beaux- Arts. Pass by Cafe de Flore or Les Deux Magots if only to see them. The charm here is in the wandering, not the destinations.

3:30 pm

Jardin du Luxembourg - The most beautiful park in Paris. Parisians come here to read, sunbathe, sail model boats on the octagonal pond, and sit in the green metal chairs scattered everywhere. Find a chair, sit down, and do nothing. This is not wasted time. This is exactly what the park was made for. The Medici Fountain tucked in the northeast corner is especially lovely.

6:30 pm

Pont des Arts at Golden Hour - Walk north back towards the Seine. The Pont des Arts footbridge offers a perfect view of the Ile de la Cite, Notre-Dame's silhouette, and the Institut de France. At sunset, the light on the stone buildings turns everything golden. This is one of the most romantic spots in Paris.



DAY 2

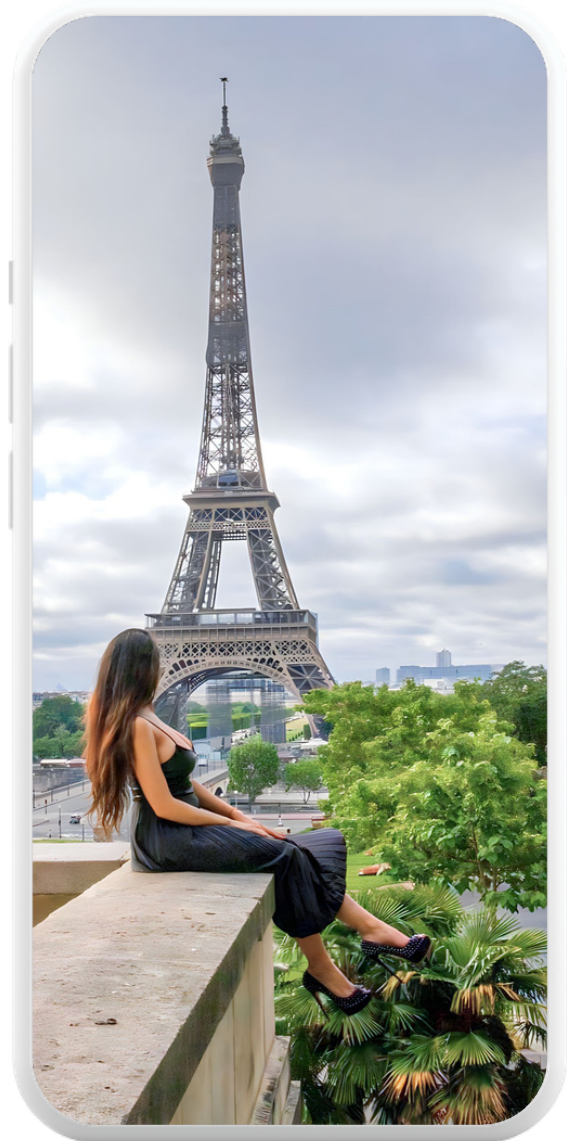
9:00 am

Trocadero Photoshoot - The best light at Trocadéro is in the morning. This is also the perfect time for a photoshoot with a local photographer via [Cheese](#). Browse photographers, check their availability and pricing, and book, all in one place.

10:30 am

Champ de Mars - Walk down from Trocadero to the gardens at the foot of the Eiffel Tower. Grab a coffee and a croissant from a bakery on Avenue de la Bourdonnais. Sit in the gardens and take it in.

If you want to explore more, the nearby Rue Cler is a charming market street with cheese shops, bakeries, and wine stores.



[CLICK HERE TO FIND YOUR PHOTOGRAPHER TODAY.](#)

11:30 am

Arc de Triomphe - Take the metro to Charles de Gaulle-Etoile. Here's the insider move: skip going up the Eiffel Tower. Instead, climb the Arc de Triomphe rooftop. The view from the top is the best panorama in Paris because you can see the entire city including the Eiffel Tower. You can't see the tower if you're standing on it. Book tickets online. The Champs-Élysées stretches below you in both directions.

2:00 pm

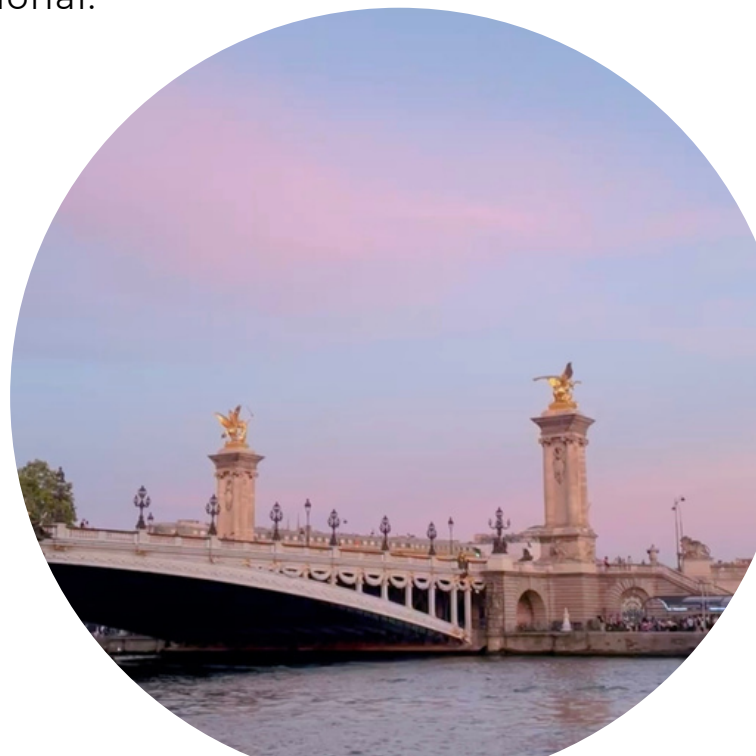
Lunch near the Champs-Elysees - Avoid eating on the Champs-Elysees itself, it's overpriced and underwhelming. Instead, duck into the side streets of the 8th arrondissement. Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honore and the streets around it have excellent lunch spots at fair prices. Look for a terrace and a formule.

3:30 pm

Petit Palais - The underrated museum with a completely free permanent collection. The building itself is a Beaux-Arts masterpiece with a stunning interior garden and cafe. Look for Monet, Courbet, and Cezanne among the collection. Open late on Fridays and Saturdays until 8pm. Closed Mondays. Even if you only have 30 minutes, it's worth stepping inside just for the architecture.

6:30 pm

Pont Alexandre III - Walk north along the river to the most beautiful bridge in Paris. Ornate gilded sculptures, Art Nouveau lamp posts, and a direct view of both the Eiffel Tower and Les Invalides. It's pure Parisian grandeur. Cross slowly, stop in the middle, and take it all in. The late afternoon light here is exceptional.



DAY 3

9:30 am

Place de la Bastille - Start the day at one of Paris's most historically charged squares. The July Column in the centre commemorates the revolutions of 1830 and 1848. The old opera house dominates the skyline. The square itself is busy and raw, not pretty, but it sets the tone for a day in the real, lived-in Paris east of the centre. Take a moment, then head north into the Marais.



9:45 am

Église Saint-Paul-Saint-Louis A 5-minute walk from Bastille on Rue Saint-Antoine. This 17th-century Jesuit church is often overlooked but the Baroque interior is stunning, with dramatic domed ceilings and a Delacroix painting tucked inside. It's quiet, free, and takes only 10 minutes. A peaceful way to start the morning before the neighbourhood wakes up.

10:15 am

Musée Carnavalet - A 5-minute walk from La Favorite. This free museum tells the entire history of Paris, from Roman times to the present, inside two stunning Renaissance mansions. The rooms dedicated to the French Revolution are fascinating, and Marcel Proust's reconstructed bedroom is hauntingly beautiful.



12:30 pm

Place des Vosges - Step out of the Carnavalet and you're practically in Place des Vosges, Paris's oldest planned square. Perfectly symmetrical red-brick townhouses frame a manicured garden. Walk the vaulted arcades, peek into the galleries. Victor Hugo's apartment at number 6 is a free museum. Sit on the grass and enjoy the calm before lunch.

1:30 pm

Marché des Enfants Rouges - Paris's oldest covered market, dating from 1615, is best experienced at lunchtime when every stall is cooking and the place is packed with energy. The Japanese stand Chez Taeko is legendary. The Moroccan couscous is excellent. Grab a plate, find a spot at one of the communal tables, and eat well. Closed Mondays.

3:00 pm

Wander the Marais - The afternoon is intentionally free. The Marais is best experienced by wandering. Rue des Rosiers for falafel and Jewish heritage. Rue de Bretagne for local shops. Rue Vieille du Temple for galleries and cafés. Get lost. That's the point.

6:30 pm

Le Colimaçon - A tiny, wonderful restaurant on Rue Vieille du Temple. The duck confit is outstanding, and the foie gras French toast has become legendary. Reserve ahead, it fills up nightly. The spiral staircase to the upstairs dining room is part of the charm. Budget 40-50 euros with wine.

DAY 4

9:30 am

Sacre-Cœur - Get here early. By 10am the steps are packed with tour groups. At 9am you'll have the panoramic view of Paris almost to yourself. The basilica is free to enter. The white dome against the morning sky is unforgettable. No need to book anything.

After your visit, walk behind the basilica to Parc Marcel Bleustein-Blanchet, a small hidden garden that most tourists never find. It's quiet, leafy, and offers a completely different perspective of the city from the back side of the hill.

10:30 am

Montmartre Back Streets - Quick stop at Place du Tertre, touristy, yes, but worth seeing once. Pass by Le Consulat, one of the most photographed cafés in Paris, and La Maison Rose, the pink house that's become an Instagram icon.

Then head to the real Montmartre: Rue Lepic (where Amélie's grocery shop was filmed), the vineyard on Rue des Saules, and the tiny Place du Calvaire with a hidden panoramic view most visitors miss. This is where Montmartre still feels like a village. Stop at a boulangerie for a late-morning.

12:00 pm

Moulin Rouge (Exterior) - Walk down to Boulevard de Clichy to see the iconic red windmill. You don't need to go to a show to appreciate it. The exterior is the photo opportunity, and the surrounding Pigalle neighbourhood has its own gritty charm that's distinctly Parisian. Take a photo, soak in the atmosphere, and keep moving.



1:00 pm

Lunch in South Pigalle - SoPi (South Pigalle) has quietly become one of the best food neighbourhoods in Paris. Rue des Martyrs is lined with bakeries, cheese shops, and excellent bistros. Pick somewhere on this street for a relaxed lunch.

3:30 pm

Parc des Buttes-Chaumont - Take the metro east to one of the most beautiful parks in Paris, yet far less visited than Luxembourg or Tuileries. Dramatic hillside paths, rocky cliffs, a waterfall, a lake, and a hilltop temple with sweeping views. It feels like countryside within the city. Allow 1-2 hours to explore properly.

6:30 pm

Canal Saint-Martin - Walk south to the canal for the evening. Tree-lined banks, iron footbridges, canalside cafes. On sunny days, grab wine, cheese, and bread, and join the Parisians picnicking along the water. This is Paris at its most relaxed, and the perfect way to wind down after a full day.



DAY 5

9:30 am

The Louvre - You can't skip the Louvre, but you can be smart about it. Book timed tickets online. Use the Passage Richelieu entrance near Palais Royal metro, not the pyramid. Pick 2-3 wings maximum. My recommendations: Egyptian antiquities, Italian Renaissance (keep walking past the Mona Lisa crowds), and Napoleon III's apartments. Allow about 3 hours. Closed Tuesdays.

10:30 am

Jardin des Tuileries - Walk straight out of the Louvre into the Tuileries, Paris's oldest public garden. The grand central alley stretches from the Louvre all the way to Place de la Concorde with the Obelisk. Find one of the green metal chairs by the circular ponds and sit. In warmer months, there are often temporary exhibitions and a small funfair. It's a beautiful decompression after the intensity of the Louvre.

12:00 pm

Jardin du Palais Royal - A 5-minute walk back towards the Louvre. One of the most peaceful spots in central Paris, hidden in plain sight. The formal garden is surrounded by elegant arcades with small boutiques and rare stamp dealers. The Colonnades de Buren in the courtyard are a beloved modern art installation. Perfect for a quiet lunch at one of the restaurants under the arcades.



2:00 pm

Palais Garnier (Opera) - Walk north to the Opera district. The Palais Garnier is one of the most opulent buildings in Paris. You can visit the interior without attending a show: the grand staircase, the auditorium with Chagall's painted ceiling, and the gilded foyers are extraordinary. If the interior is closed, the exterior alone, with its sculptures and green copper dome, is worth the detour.

4:30 pm

Galleries Lafayette Rooftop - A 2-minute walk from the Opera. Take the elevator to the free rooftop terrace for a panoramic view of Paris with the Opera in the foreground. Inside, the main hall has a stunning Art Nouveau glass dome. You don't need to buy anything, just look up.

7:30 pm

Skybar Paris Rooftop - End your five days with champagne and an Eiffel Tower. The Skybar sits atop the Pullman Montparnasse hotel with a panoramic view across the city. Entrance includes one drink. It's not cheap, but as a final evening in Paris, it's hard to beat. Open daily from 6pm.



THE ONE THING YOU'LL THANK YOURSELF FOR

Here's something I've learned shooting hundreds of sessions in Paris: the photos you take yourself never match how the trip actually felt. Selfies don't capture it. Asking a stranger doesn't capture it. You know this already.

A 30-minute session with a photographer who knows the light, the angles, and the hidden spots does.

By Day 2, you're already at Trocadéro, the Champ de Mars, the bridges along the Seine, some of the most photogenic locations in the world. That's why we placed the photoshoot here.

Cheese makes it simple. Open the app, browse photographer portfolios, see their prices, pick someone whose style you love, and book. That's it. Most sessions last 30 to 60 minutes and your edited photos arrive within 72 hours.

No blurry phone photos. No awkward selfies. Just real moments, captured by someone who does this every day.

This is the one thing every traveler tells me they wish they'd done.

**CLICK HERE TO FIND YOUR
PHOTOGRAPHER TODAY.**

LOCAL CHEAT CODES

SAFETY -

Watch for pickpockets at any turistic spot, mainly at the Eiffel Tower, Louvre, and on the metro. Keep bags zipped and in front of you in crowds and do not stop to accept any bracelet or sign any petition.

USEFUL PHRASES -

Bonjour! - Always greet when entering anywhere.

L'addition, s'il vous plaît = The check, please.

Pardon - Excuse me (on the street)

C'est combien? - How much is this?

METRO TIPS - Lines 1 and 14 are driverless and reliable. Avoid Lines 6, 9 and 13 during rush hour.

Châtelet-Les Halles is a maze - use exits carefully. And the metro closes at 1AM (2AM Fri-Sat).

For late night transportations check Noctilien buses (N)

MONEY-SAVING TIPS - First Sunday: many museums are free (some need reservation). Under 25 + EU passport? Most museums are free! Tap water is safe, ask for "carafe d'eau" in restaurants for free water.

MERCI!

Thank you for downloading this guide, I hope it helps you have the most amazing time in Paris.

Don't forget to capture it forever. Book a photographer through [Cheese](#) and walk away with photos you'll actually frame.

And make sure to follow me on Instagram for more travel tips, Paris secrets, and new guides coming soon.

À bientôt,

Erika 



[erikavilares](#)