

# Top 10 do's and don'ts

Paris's seductive charms are legendary, and for good reason: Inviting sidewalk cafés, gleaming boutiques, world-class museums, and a fabled restaurant scene make Paris the runway model of cities—beautiful, fashionable, confident and inspiring envy at every turn.

Text and photos: Cindy-Lou Dale

But with expectations running so high, Paris can occasionally disappoint. When you find yourself elbow-to-elbow with throngs of tourists, tucking in yet another overpriced meal, you'll wonder how the Paris that travelers fall in love with, has proved so elusive. Unless that is, you read and discover how to avoid the top ten mistakes first-timers make in the City of Light.

**1 Don't shop on the Champs-Élysées:** It may once have been the most beautiful avenue in the world, but times have changed and it's currently overrun with global chain stores, auto dealerships and movie multiplexes.



**Do follow in the well-heeled footsteps of locals:** Head straight to the designer shops of the Rue des Francs-Bourgeois in the chic Marais district. For an old-fashioned ambiance, look to Paris's covered passages which date back to the 19th century. These were the city's first malls and beneath their vaulted ceilings of glass and wrought iron, you'll find a trove unusual wares from French designers, antiquarian book dealers, art galleries and quirky toy shops. Galerie Vivienne, just north of the Palais Royal, is the most elegant of the lot.



**2 Don't get starstruck at mealtimes:** Home to +70 Michelin-starred restaurants, Paris is a gourmet's paradise, but with it comes a lot of pomp and circumstance, not to mention sky-high prices.



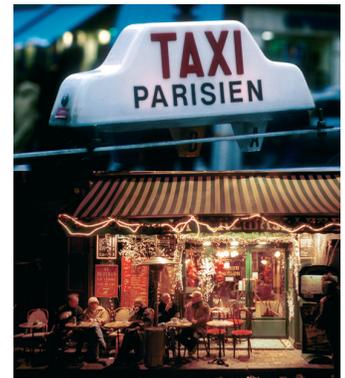
**Do have your dinner à la mode:** Several Michelin-starred chefs have abandoned the rigid confines of haute-cuisine and opened convivial bistros that serve up simpler yet outstanding meals—and the locals are just crazy about them. If you can't get in at dinner, try arriving by 11:45 am for lunch (first come, first served).



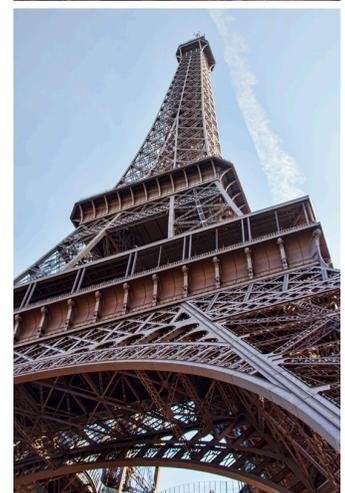
**3 Don't spend all day at the Louvre or Musée d'Orsay:** Sure, they're Paris's most celebrated museums, and yes, they do house some famous works of art but don't think for a second that they're the only options.



**Do get to know Paris's lesser-known museums:** Many of Paris's smaller museums contain equally important and beautiful art, and are often more pleasant since you won't be elbowed out of the way by photo-snapping swarms. You'll find Monet's famous Nymphéas (water lily) murals in the Musée de l'Orangerie, at the far end of the Tuileries Gardens. The Musée Marmottan is home to the world's largest collection of Monets and the Musée Rodin, housed in a luminous villa, is one of the most romantic museums in the city.



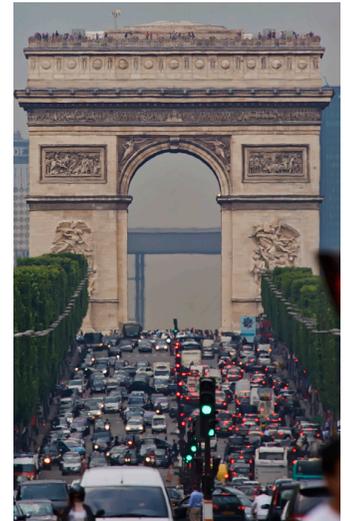
**4 Don't commit a fashion faux pas:** Don't ever, even in the sweltering heat of summer, think about wearing shorts in Paris unless you really do want to be treated like a hapless tourist. It simply isn't done—and while you're at it, leave those gleaming white running shoes at home, too.



**Do take a crash course in French style:** The French are quite casual, but they've mastered the art of the clean, coordinated look. The trick is to keep it simple, tidy and thoughtfully assembled: Black or gray is always a good bet; accessorize with either a bold scarf, a hat or one piece of jewelry and make sure things fit the way they should. Complete your outfit with a fitted jacket and the best shoes in your closet. The final effect should look effortless.



**5 Don't get around town in a cab:** Taxis can be hard to come by and can't be flagged down on the street (you need to call ahead for one or find a taxi stand). Cabbing also leaves you vulnerable to Paris's famously snarled traffic.



**Do take a stroll:** The center of Paris is only a couple of miles wide and the rewards for taking to the streets on foot are huge. For longer distances, hop on the Métro. From any given spot in Paris, you're never more than 500 yards from the nearest station; it's cheaper than a cab and often faster.

**6 Don't seek out a bohemian  
ambiance on the Left Bank:**

Les Deux Magots on the Boulevard St. Germain, the former hangout of intellectuals, has all the authenticity of Times Square. You're far more likely to find yourself cheek by jowl with a tourist than eavesdropping on any famous philosophers.

**Do find the real Paris on the Canal St.**

**Martin:** Boho hipsters have laid claim to the area around the Canal St. Martin, a once-derelict part of the tenth arrondissement that now buzzes with cafés and trendy boutiques. Settle at a sidewalk table at Chez Prune, the see-and-be-seen ground zero for this chic Right Bank hood (36 Rue Beaurepaire).

**7 Don't waste time at the Eiffel**

**Tower:** After trudging through one labyrinthine line for tickets and re-queuing for the cattle-car elevators, once you get to the top you'll realize that you don't have a view of the tower, just a view from it. This is too bad, since it's the defining feature of the Paris skyline. Then you need to queue to get back down to terra firma.

**Do enjoy a dinner and a view:** An infinitely more civilized approach is to book a table at Les Ombres, the rooftop restaurant of the Musée du Quai Branly, which makes the most of its tall neighbor by enabling diners to feast their eyes on the tower in its gorgeous entirety.

**8 Don't book the cheapest hotel:**

Finding a decent Paris hotel for a reasonable price can bring even the savviest travelers to the brink of despair. You might find a terrific deal at a big chain hotel, but once you're sitting in a beige I-could-be-anywhere cube on the outskirts of town, you'll realize your mistake.



**Do book a furnished apartment:**

Furnished apartments can be found to suit every budget. You'll be amazed at how much living space you get for your money, especially if you plan to stay for more than a couple of days. Have a rental agency (Paris Perfect, Guest Apartment Services, and Haven in Paris are reputable options) do the work. Once you're in your private pied-à-terre, glass of wine in hand, listening to the sounds of the neighborhood through the open windows, you'll feel like you've truly arrived.

**9 Don't fill up on croissants:** We

all swoon over those flaky golden crescents, but it would be a big mistake to limit yourself to Paris's best-known pastry and miss out on deluxe confections that aren't as well known.

**Do munch on macaroons:** French

macaroons (dainty gems that come in a rainbow of colors and exotic flavors) consist of two meringue-like cookies bound together by a delicious ganache. Several top bakers are famed for their novel flavors—cherry amaretto, violet, and white truffle. Debate rages among Parisians over which are the city's best; to decide for yourself, sample rose at Pierre Hermé, caramel with sea salt at Ladurée and orange-ginger at Gérard Mulot.

**10 Don't buy into stereotypes:** We've

all heard about snobby Parisians' legendary rudeness, their surly waiters and unhelpful salespeople. It's true that Parisians are reserved and less likely to become your instant best friend, but you won't be doing yourself any favors by assuming they don't like you, then be rude to them in return.

**Do be mindful of your manners:** Imitate

them and you'll no doubt be amply rewarded for your efforts. Learn a few French words and phrases. Even if it's just a crash course on the flight over and your delivery is less than perfect, the fact that you're trying will win points. Salespeople in smaller boutiques greet customers and expect to be greeted in return: A simple "Bonjour, Madame" upon entering a shop will do wonders for your status. ❖

Paris is the most popular tourist destination in the world. Newspapers and magazines the world over write about it, it's on our TV screens and in films, books, paintings, music—and just when you think you know it well, there's always something to surprise you in a place you'd least expect.



Whatever you do, or don't do, don't miss out on Paris. Book cheap flights to Paris from USA and Canada with WOW air and start working on your high school French.

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