

THE PARIS PURSE: MAKING ₹26,000 LAST A WEEKEND

HERE'S HOW TO EXPLORE THE FRENCH CAPITAL IN UNDER €300 WHEN YOU HAVE LONGER THAN A LAYOVER AND A LITTLE UNDER 72 HOURS

BY PRANNAY PATHAK



Paris is the birthplace of the flâneur, but in order to make the most of your time and money, utilise its excellent Metro system and get a two-day Paris Visite Pass (€19.50/₹1,700; available at Metro and RER stations). The pass can be used across the public transport network, including the tramway, RER, buses and even the Montmartre Funicular.

VICENTE SARGUES/SHUTTERSTOCK

DAY 1

€32/
₹2,780

MISE EN SEINE

So what if it's touristy—cruising down the **Seine** on a bright morning, like a modern-day Fitzcarraldo, past sights such as the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre and the Notre-Dame Cathedral, is just the ideal prologue to your weekend in Paris. Visualise Monet and Renoir painting its bridges each time you encounter one, and engage in crêpe-tasting at the base of Eiffel Tower. Basic cruises from Bateaux Parisiens are priced at around €12/₹1,050.

BOHEMIAN BASTION

€48/
₹4,200

Dial up the Parisian vibe by arriving at the charming **Latin Quarter** for an exploration of the popular neighbourhood on the left bank of the Seine. **La Maison d'Isabelle**, which reopened only this August, is one of the best-kept secrets among lovers of French pastry, thanks to its understated exterior with some not-so-understated claims painted on the awning. The little establishment has excellent all-butter croissants that cost just one euro (₹87), which along with a steaming cuppa cost about €3/₹260. The Latin Quarter is known for its cafés and bookshops—notably the historic and much-feted **Shakespeare and Company**.

The titles on sale might be on the higher side, but if you still want to buy, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* or *The Little Prince* are fitting picks, and are priced at about

€12/₹1,045 (don't forget the free Shakespeare and Co. stamp). Mugs and totes are better as collectibles, and are priced in the €14-15 range (₹1,250-1,350). While you're here in the 5th arrondissement, a trip to the **Pantheon** is in order (entry €11.50/₹1,000). Often called Europe's other Pantheon (the one in Rome being the first), this neoclassical structure is where the likes of Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Marie Curie and Louis Braille are interred.

For hunger pangs, try the surprisingly good Lebanese fare on offer at **Chez Le Libanais**, a 15-minute walk away. Their wraps and shawarmas are to die for and will set you back by €6/₹500. Those feeling differently may head for the **Grand Mosque of Paris** (entry is €3/₹260) to drown in its architectural magnificence. Rouse yourself awake with their famed mint tea and excellent Moroccan pastries at the gorgeous onsite café (€4/₹350 for tea and pastry).



CLEO FROM 4 TO 6

€32/
₹2,780

The **Île de la Cité** offers a delightful respite from all the exercise. There is ample reward for straying from the more-trodden trail around Notre-Dame; the **Marché aux Fleurs** is a veritable bouquet of floral and herbal delights right at the edge of the island, but if you don't feel up to walking, the **Square du Vert-Galant** has a few spots to luxuriate under the shade and enjoy a popsicle (€1/₹87).

Make a dash for **Musée d'Orsay** in the 7th arrondissement (€16/₹1,400) before it closes for the day. This breathtaking museum that is built inside an old railway station is currently hosting exhibitions on photography and cinema (Sep 2021-Jan 2022), works collected by Paul Signac (Oct 2021-Jan 2022), and a retrospective of artist Marlene Dumas (Oct 2021-Feb 2022). Or just spend an hour or two admiring the Van Goghs, Cezannes and Monets.

It is here that you will find the **Pharmacie de la Bourdonnais**, a heritage pharmacy that is also the city's oldest, and comes recommended by podcaster and Parisian, Oliver Gee (the man behind *The New York Times*-recommended podcast *The Earful Tower*). Owner Gerard Chavaroc also sells walking sticks (€8/₹700) but it's the decor that's worth a hop to this establishment. However, if you're short on time, the **Puces de la Porte de Vanves** flea market at the Marc Sangnier and Georges Lafenestre avenues is one both residents and visitors



swear by. The vintage goods, though steeply priced, can be brought down if one says *bonjour* and haggles well. At any rate, a hippie tee shouldn't cost more than €7/₹610. But carry cash to be able to make any purchases.

PHOTO COURTESY: SHAKESPEARE AND CO. (MUG); BUMBLEDEE/SHUTTERSTOCK (MUSEUM)



€70/
₹6,090
Approx

PASSION AND THE ARC

Plenty of Parisians contend that it is the top of the **Arc de Triomphe** and not the Iron Lady, which reveals the city in its true splendour.

Towards twilight, cross the Seine over the Pont de l'Alma, and walk towards the triumphal arch. Tickets are available online (€13/₹ 1,184), and the views of the Paris sprawl, with the Louvre, the Eiffel Tower and the Sacré Coeur visible—make it worth every cent.

A few minutes away, in the 6th arrondissement, is the **Brasserie Lipp** (yes, the one from *A Moveable Feast* and *Midnight in Paris*). This historical establishment is known for its exquisite food and typical French snark. But brave all that and go for the beer (Lipp, Brown and Tiger Bock; all €7/₹610 apiece)—so what if it isn't a *distingué* à la Hemingway? Those looking to avoid the Hemingway route, check out **Chez Gladines**, a constant favourite with students and budget travellers. The folks here serve comfort French-Basque fare, and the portions are handsome. Expect to pay €15/₹1,300 for starters, main course, dessert and wine—but bring cash. Catch the Metro to Ledru Rollin station on line 8, from which a five-minute walk away is the **Bastille Hostel**, which offers affordable and clean dorm-style lodging (€40/₹3,480; breakfast included), but book in advance through their website.

€44/
₹3,830

DAY 2 THE RIGHT BANK

Post breakfast at the hostel, set out to explore **Montmartre** (the closest Metro stations are Anvers and Abbesses), which has structures exuding rustic gentility, stimulating street art, viewpoints, and memorials. It's easy to get lost or distracted in this neighbourhood, but stay focused and you'll reap rich rewards. For example, located just five minutes away from the Sacré-Cœur is **Espace Dalí**, an intimate museum dedicated to Salvador Dalí (entry €9/₹784). Return in the evening to 22 Rue des Saules, where Picasso's favourite cabaret awaits you—Paris is not just about The Lido and Moulin Rouge, you see. Called **Au Lapin Agile**, the cabaret offers a show and a drink at €35/₹3,050 (€25/₹2,170 for students).



€25/
₹2,175

ENGAGING 11TH

Pastry chef/author David Lebovitz has more than a few words of praise for the

11th arrondissement, where you can do **BAPBAP's brewery tour and tasting** (1.5-hours; €15/₹ 1,300). Flowery and with cereal notes, this local Parisian craft beer is recommended by *Time Out*. The nearby **Bastille Market** is one of Europe's most famous open-air, fresh-produce markets, but one can also get absolute steals on vintage goods, chocolate, jewellery and the like (€10/₹880).



ALIKOSTROMITIN/SHUTTERSTOCK (BARLEY); POLUDZIBER/SHUTTERSTOCK (MUSEUM)
FACING PAGE: CHRISTIAN MUELLER/SHUTTERSTOCK (ARCH); ERIC COTE/SHUTTERSTOCK (FOOD)

€47/
₹4,090

EVENING IN PARIS

If you're not too hot for the Eiffel, the **Parc de Belleville** on the eastern end of the city, in the calming environs of the 20th arrondissement, promises an hour full of relaxation with calming water features, a wide lawn expanse, and a heritage vineyard (entry fee: €1/₹87). The **Centre Georges Pompidou**, an epitome of high-tech Brutalist architecture, and an exoskeletal behemoth known for its formidable modern art collection comprising works of Dadaism, Cubism, Fauvism and countless other movements, is just 15 minutes away by Metro. The entry fee will set you back by €14/₹1,217.

Apéro is best taken at **Lavomatic**, the hidden speakeasy disguised as a laundromat and on every boho traveller's lips these days. Located close to the Place de la République in the 10th arrondissement under a rather banal facade, it actually needs you to press a button on a washing machine to get in. The menu changes every three months, and cocktails are available for €9/₹783, a glass of wine for €5.50/₹480, and dishes to share start at €8/₹700.

Grab early dinner at the **Bouillon Pigalle**, a retro French bistro serving classics with a modern spin (€10/₹870 for a three-course dinner) at Boulevard de Clichy before circling back to **Au Lapin Agile** for your cabaret show. Don't forget to get some nice house wine inside you (€4.80/₹418) while you chat up a stranger sharing the table.