

Recommended itineraries

When you are visiting a new city and struggling with working things out from guidebooks, it's sometimes difficult to identify the easiest and most interesting areas to visit where a number of sights are fairly close together. We are therefore making a few suggestions which may help, especially if you are only making a brief visit.

What we have done is to identify eleven varied itineraries or groups of sights which should involve minimum distances, together with some suggestions about 'What to do if it's wet'.

For some you would have to go by car or taxi, a few can be reached on the RER and one or two may be within walking or wheeling distance from where you are staying.

One thing you need to watch out for is opening times, as some major museums and buildings are closed one day a week, particularly on Mondays or Tuesdays. You will find details about this in the conventional guides and on the appropriate websites.

If you're in Paris for several days there's something to be said for trying to see and experience different aspects of the city. There are the well-known tourist spots, several of which are 'must sees'. Then there's the business area around la Défense, there are new and developing areas in the 12th and 13th arrondissements (such as Bercy Village), and there's la Villette. They're all rather different.

We have given them an 'order of priority', but we appreciate that this is entirely based on personal preference. What you want to do will depend on your particular interests, how long you're staying, what transport you have and what the weather is like.

The itineraries are:

- **The Eiffel Tower, Palais de Chaillot and a boat trip on the Seine**
- **Les Halles, the Pompidou Centre and Notre Dame**
- **Versailles**
- **The Louvre and/or the Orsay**
- **Montmartre**
- **La Villette**
- **La Défense and the Grande Arche**
- **Shopping**

- **The Champs Elysées**
- **Bercy village**
- **St-Germain-en-Laye**

The Eiffel tower and Seine boat trip

This particular itinerary is an ideal way to see a lot of Paris with a minimum of effort and some of it can be done from the comfort of a glass-covered boat! It could be worthwhile doing the boat trip early on during a visit, as you will get a good idea of the layout of the city and of the major sights. It's obviously best to do it on a nice sunny day if you can, or possibly to do it in the evening when many of the buildings are floodlit and can look stunning.

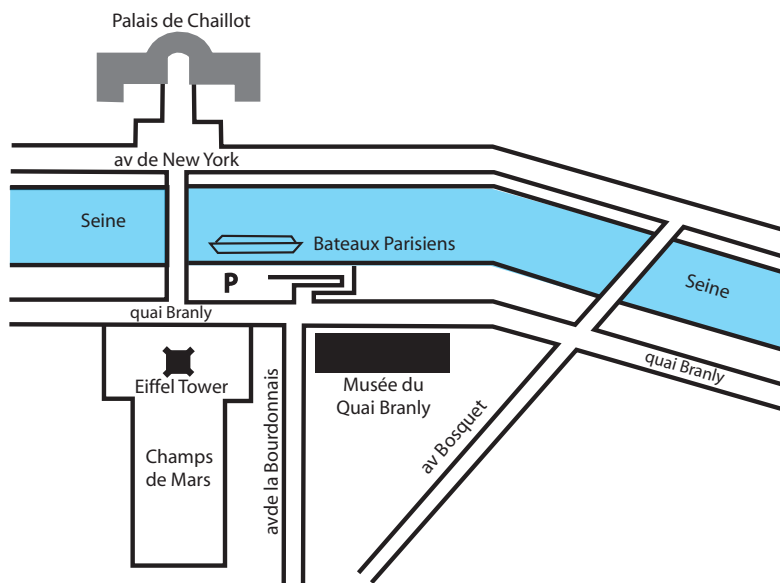
Apart from the Champ de Mars behind the tower, the other main sight in the area is the Musée du quai Branly. On the other side of the river is the Palais de Chaillot, including the Aquarium du Trocadéro and the Navy Museum. It also has some spectacular fountains on the riverside and provides a fine view back across the river looking at the Tower. Also across the river in one direction is the Musée Guimet (Museum of Asiatic Art) and in the other direction, the Musée du Vin. The write-ups are in Area I described under *Sights*.

If you're going to spend time in any of the various museums you could easily put together an itinerary lasting a couple of days.

The order you do things is up to you. The view from the Tower is best when the sun is fairly low in the sky, either early in the morning or in the late afternoon. If you do the Tower first you may appreciate the relaxation of the boat trip afterwards.

Each of the places involved (the Tour Eiffel, the Musée du quai Branly, the Bateaux Parisiens, and the attractions on the other side of the river) are written up in some detail under *Sights* or *Getting around*, and all are reasonably accessible. There aren't many eating places in this area, although there's a good restaurant in the west wing of the Palais de Chaillot (with the loo referred to below in the foyer outside).

Unfortunately it's not near an accessible RER station, and unless you're staying nearby or coming by car or taxi, chair users might consider using an accessible mini-bus for this one (see *Getting around*). The best place for parking is probably the Musée du quai Branly, which is about 400m



BATEAUX PARISIENS

away, though if you're going on the boat as well, there is the Bateaux Parisiens CP at the port de la Bourdonnais off quai Branly and opposite ave de la Bourdonnais. It is on the riverside, only about 200m from the tower (see the diagram). The Bateaux Parisiens CP is free for the first two hours if you're doing a boat trip.

There are wheelchair toilets/cubicles:

- **by the East pillar of the Eiffel Tower** where there is an underground public toilet (40c charge). A clear sign points over slightly rough ground to an open lift (D80 W85 L130) to bypass – 22 steps. The lift leads to toilet where the attendant will open the **wheelchair cubicle (D90 ST150 SH50)**;
- in the west wing of the Palais de Chaillot off the foyer leading to the Museum of Mankind where there's a **wheelchair toilet (D85 ST75 SH50)**;
- in the **Musée du Quai Branly**. Two lifts (D90 W140 L130) near the entrance bypass the –25 steps to the cloakroom in level minus one, and a further –28 to level minus two where there are mens and womens toilets, each with **wheelchair cubicles (D90 ST100+ SH50)**.

Around Nôtre Dame and Les Halles

Points of interest with good access include the late 1970s developments at les Halles and the Pompidou Centre, the big shops at the end of the rue de Rivoli, and Notre Dame cathedral across the bridge on the island. The Hôtel de Ville has a splendid façade, but a visit inside needs to be organised and booked in advance. The various historic buildings on the Ile de la Cité also have interesting façades and there are excellent views from both riverbanks. The Sainte Chapelle may be worth a visit, and there's a description of access in the *Sights* chapter. Past the river you run into the Left Bank with its unique atmosphere and numerous cafés. There are other buildings and interesting features and you will find details elsewhere in the text.

The distance involved, if you start at les Halles, go round the route as far as Notre Dame, a little way along the river bank and then return to les Halles, would be about 3km.

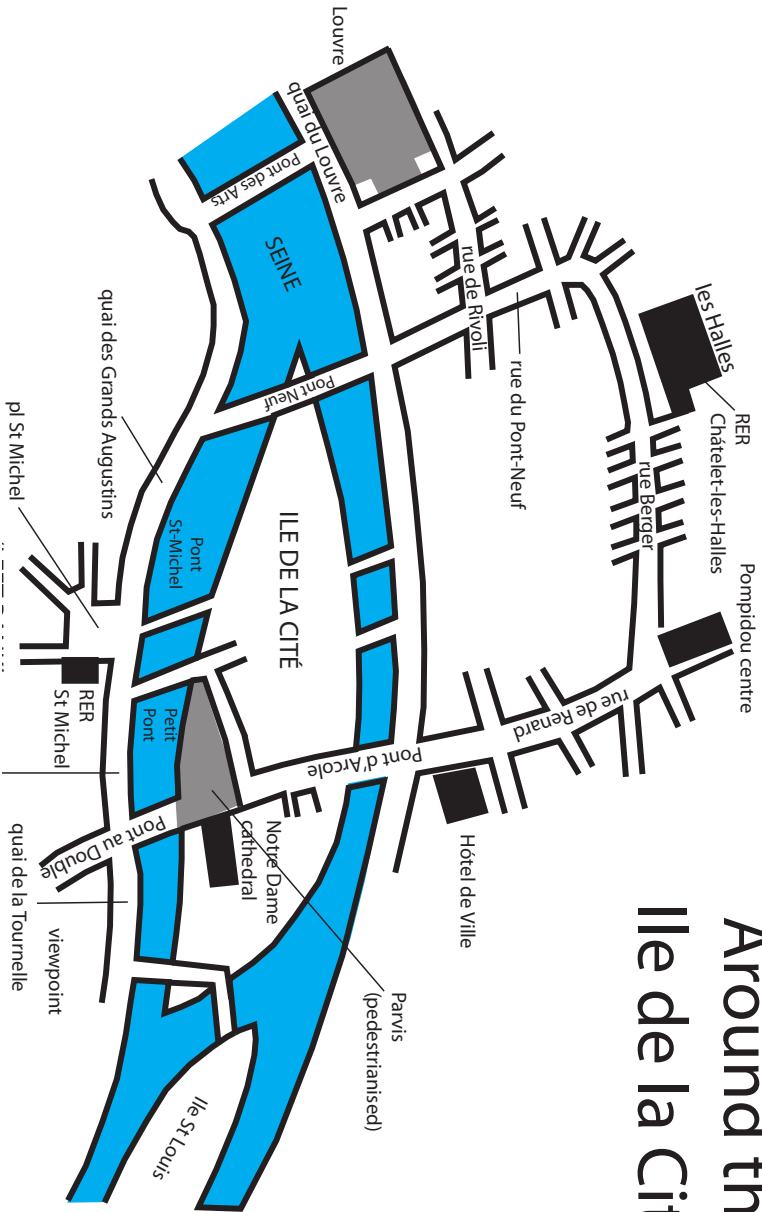
To the north and northeast there is a substantial pedestrianised area, although many of the streets are cobbled. Rue Berger which leads from les Halles to the Pompidou centre has numerous restaurants, cafés and fast food joints, most of which have flat access. After Pompidou, the route takes you down the rue de Renard to the Hôtel de Ville. The itinerary then leads you to Notre Dame, which is something you shouldn't miss. Across the pont au Double, with the statue of Charlemagne on the right, it's worth turning left along the riverside so that you can get a good view of the cathedral from nearer the east end, and see the magnificent flying buttresses.

If you are still feeling adventurous, there are dozens of interesting restaurants in the left bank area around St Michel. Equally you may want to walk or wheel back alongside the river, then over the Pont Neuf. As there's a lot to see and do, and as with the previous itinerary you could split it into two:

- tackle the les Halles/Pompidou Centre end on one day, and
- take in Notre Dame with a wander round the left bank and St Germain on another.

There are wheelchair toilets at les Halles, in the Pompidou Centre and in the Bazaar Hôtel De Ville (BHV) store.

Around the Ile de la Cité



The diagram covers a compact area right in the centre of Paris with a wide variety of things to do and see, many of which are accessible. There are UGCPs at both les Halles and the Pompidou Centre. The Pompidou CP has facilities for coaches and minibuses, but without lift access up into the Centre (see *Parking in the 3rd and 4th*). There is an excellent UGCP with lift access outside Notre Dame. The RER station at Châtelet-les-Halles is 'accessible' by lift, and the various places are described under *Sights* in areas E and F.

Versailles

While the palace and gardens at Versailles are huge, it's a unique place and it is possible to see quite a lot if you plan your visit. If you can't walk very far it would be preferable to come by car. Train travel is possible using the direct line from Gare St Lazare to Versailles; there is flat access at both stations, provided you can handle getting on and off the trains. However, the station at Versailles is almost 1km from the palace. If you prefer to use an accessible minibus, this might be a visit on which to splash out, and make a half-day or even a whole day booking. Then you could see both the main palace, some of the gardens, and possibly the Trianons, using different parking areas. The minibus can also drive to near the canal where there are good places for a discreet picnic.

The normal distance from the CPs in front of the palace is about 400m across a bumpy forecourt. Disabled visitors are allowed to drive right up to the archway leading to the gardens to unload. The car has to be taken back to the CP. If you unload near the arch, go through it to the gardens and take the little 'train' described below or hire one of the buggies, you would walk or wheel only about 200/300m.

If you want to go inside the palace, we've described how being dropped off by the archway leaves you next to the visitors' enquiry desk and lift. You will have to go quite a long way inside the palace to see much of it, probably over 500m. Part of this will be against the flow of other visitors, since there's only one main lift. Some parts of the Palace are spectacular, particularly the Hall of Mirrors.

To see the gardens and the palace's façade, it is best to go through the archways from the Royal Court and into the gardens behind, going as far

as you want. From the parking in place d'Armes in front of the palace, you should expect to cover about 1km to see a reasonable amount. Just past the archway on the left side, there's a regular motorised 'train' which takes visitors for an extensive tour of the gardens. It is slightly awkward to get into, but most disabled walkers would find it possible. For chair users there's the possibility of sideways transfer, which is again a bit awkward as you are transferring upwards through a rather narrow gap. If you can get on board, it's an ideal way to see the gardens. One excellent facility is that self-drive four-seater golf buggies can

See the full write-up in the chapter on *Sights outside the Périphérique* for details and diagrams.

be hired from the entrance on the gardens side near the Princes Court. **There are three wheelchair accessible buggies**, which have a flat area of 100cm by 100cm, ramp W85 and cost €20 /hour. It would almost certainly be a good idea to book one of these in advance to ensure that it is available for you.

Alternatively you can drive down the sides of the gardens, possibly stopping for a bit by the Neptune Gate. Another CP can be found in allée St Antoine for stopping and seeing the gardens round the Trianons. You can also drive south along the allée St Antoine to see the Apollo Basin and the huge artificial lakes including the Grand Canal. The diagram shows a drive right around the Versailles site. Some parking places are marked. You should get good views of both the palace and gardens. Probably the best thing is to drive around the indicated route, getting a feel for what is there. Then you can decide where to stop and spend some time when going around a second time. The best places for stopping and looking at particular things may depend on the time of year.

We found six wheelchair/adapted toilets:

- off the Princes Court, to the left of the Royal Court of the main palace;
- 150m from the Grand Trianon;
- near the boat hire place on the Grand Canal;
- near the entrance to the Bosquet de Dauphin in the main part of the gardens;
- in town inside McDonalds, rue du Maréchal Foch, on the right-hand side of the counter. It is signed and unisex;

- and in McDonalds opposite Versailles-rive-gauche RER line C station, rue Royale.

The Louvre and/or the Orsay

Either of these make an itinerary on their own. They are thoroughly described in their respective write-ups in the *Sights* chapter. Neither is near an accessible RER station, so it would be best to come by car or taxi, or possibly by bus. Both have cafés and restaurants, and **a number of wheelchair toilets**. Although the Orsay is large, it doesn't begin to compare with the vastness of the Louvre and, unless you specifically want to see certain art treasures, we would recommend the Orsay museum as being interesting and more manageable.

Having said that, just seeing the new Louvre entrance and riding down on 'le Tube' is quite an experience, and a visit to the Louvre is perfectly practicable provided you plan to see a sensibly limited group of exhibits. There are also the Jardin des Tuileries and the two smaller galleries the Orangerie and the Jeu de Paume.

See the write-ups in the chapter on *Sights* under areas B and H.

Montmartre

Because this is a hilly area with cobbled streets at the top of a hill, it poses special access problems. On the other hand it's an interesting and atmospheric place. The Sacré Cœur is one of Paris' great icons, and dominates its northern skyline. The inside of the basilica is step-free, and there are some amazing mosaics and stained glass. It also retains the atmosphere of being a house of prayer, and not just a place where tourists come to gawp. From the terrace just below the Sacré Cœur, the views are superb on a clear day.

The funicular provides a step-free route to a level a little way below the Sacré Cœur. In spite of the substantial flight of steps at the main entrance of the basilica, **there IS a step-free route for getting in**. There are details in the Montmartre write-up in *Sights* area K. If you're taking a taxi, you could go straight to this entrance. When you come out you can go around the back of the basilica to the place du Tertre, and then downwards to take the funicular.

There are various ways of approaching Montmartre. Down at the bottom of the hill there is the *blvd de Clichy* and the *blvd de Rochechouart*. If you can get on to the *Promotrain* (on which you need to transfer into a rather narrow seat in little coaches which are up 2 steps) it will take you to the top. It goes from *place Blanche*.

There's a very limited amount of metered parking on the top of the hill, so you will have to be patient and/or lucky to find a space. There are UGCPs with lift access to the street at **Anvers** (*Parking guide* page 147), 41 *blvd Rochechouart*, 75009 and **Barbès-Rochechouart** (*Parking guide* page 263), 104 *blvd de la Chapelle*, 75018 but these are both at the bottom of the hill.

Place d'Anvers is about 200m from the funicular railway which has been modernised, and has entirely step-free access both in and out of the rail-car. At the top a call button and intercom will allow you to get the gate opened if the ticket office is not staffed. When visited in August 2007 it was 'under repair'. It was not operational for several months, but we are told that it's now working again. At the top of the railway there's a fabulous view over the city. The *place du Tertre*, where the painters are, is a further 200m uphill over many cobbles.

At the top of the hill behind the Basilica (and near the step-free entrance), there's a **wheelchair toilet (D75 ST95 SH40)** in the *Parc de la Turlure* off *rue du Chevalier de la Barre*. The toilet is in a green hut less than 50m inside the park, near the railings.

There's another **wheelchair toilet** in the *Halle St Pierre* at the bottom of the hill (see *Musée d'Art Naïf* in *Sights*).

La Villette

The whole area around the *Parc de la Villette* has been extensively developed. It is split into two by the *Canal de l'Ourcq*. It is quite possible to spend a whole day here with a variety of things to do.

The northern part includes the Science and Technology Museum, with the dazzling reflective *Géode* behind it. The southern section includes the *Cité de la Musique*, the *Grande Halle* and the larger section of the park. This includes some themed play-areas for children, and part of the canal which passes through the middle of the park. There is also the *place de la Fontaine aux Lions* and the *Café de la Musique*.

Not being near any of the accessible RER stations, you would do best to come by car or taxi, or possibly by bus. For the northern part, the UGCP (*Parking guide* page 274) provides lift access to the main hall of the museum. The entrance to the CP is from ave Corentin.

For the southern part there's a UGCP off ave Jean Jaurès (*Parking guide* page 273).

A thorough description of the facilities appear in the chapter on Sights under la Villette. We found more wheelchair toilets in the Cité des Sciences than in any other building in Paris!

La Défense and the Grande Arche

This is the ultra-modern development with the Grande Arche at the end of the *Grand Axis* which is the extended line through the Arc de Triomphe and Concorde. It is described in considerable detail in the chapter on *Sights outside the Périphérique*. La Défense has an 'accessible' RER station on line A and good underground parking with lift access. Not only is there the Arche, which is fully 'accessible' and affords superb views (providing the platform stairlift is working), but also Quatre Temps, one of the largest indoor shopping malls in Europe. It's an ideal place for a day of sunshine and showers, so you can see the view in the sunshine, and get out of the rain while shopping or eating. In the summer the Parvis is a lively place with a roundabout, childrens play area, fountains and other attractions.

The area has reasonably good access, although a number of unnecessary barriers have been built in, largely due to lack of thought and understanding.

There are at least four wheelchair toilets, although with somewhat variable accessibility. The best are in Quatre Temps, and in the CNIT building. It's quite an interesting place to be on a Friday evening when all the offices empty, and people make for the bars and cafés.

Shopping

The best grouping of shops, apart from the indoor complexes at les Halles and Quatre Temps appears to be the one described principally in areas D and E under *Sights*. This starts at blvd Haussmann, goes past the Madeleine as far as the west end of the rue de Rivoli.

It comprises the group of large department stores on the blvd Haussmann near the Opéra. You might like to ‘take tea’ in one of the expensive hotels around there if you want a bit of class and to have a rest in the afternoon.

Underground car parking is possible at Galeries Lafayette. The area is not near an accessible RER station but three of the line 14 stations are within about 500m of the shopping area, namely Gare St Lazare, Madeleine and Pyramides. There are **wheelchair toilets** in Galeries Lafayette and in Printemps.

The Champs Elysées

The avenue itself is broad and long and slopes very gently. Everyone has heard of it, with the Arc de Triomphe at one end and place de la Concorde at the other. In the middle are the Grand and Petit Palais, surrounded by flat accessible gardens. There are a lot of expensive shops, together with airline offices, banks, travel agents, cafés and cinemas, mainly towards the Arc de Triomphe end.

It’s a wide straight street and, although it doesn’t look it, it’s about 2km long. *What we recommend or suggest is that it’s best seen by driving in a car or taxi along it, going round the Arc and crossing place de la Concorde.*

If you want to spend a little time there absorbing the atmosphere, there’s a UGCP in ave George V just off the Champs Elysées (*Parking guide* page 138). It has ten BB spaces. There are two lifts (D75 W100 L120) that go to ground/street level on either side of the road, by 88 Champs-Élysées. It also has a wheelchair toilet on level minus three. There’s a fuller description of the possibilities for parking under *Parking in the 8th arrondissement* in the Sights chapter. You can come to the Arc de Triomphe on RER line A, as Étoile station has lifts.

Access to the Arc de Triomphe is difficult/challenging, as described under *Sights*. It’s about 1.5km to the Palais de Chaillot, and just across the river you could do the suggested Eiffel tower and boat trip itinerary. Depending on how long you’ve got, and whether or not you want to while away the hours at an expensive Champs Elysées café, you could easily combine both into one day. We didn’t manage to find any toilets for wheelchair users in the area, apart from the ones in the Grand and Petit Palais and the

one in the George V CP (where you'll need to hang around until someone comes along with a ticket to operate the lift). There are wheelchair toilets in the Jardin des Tuileries just past Concorde.

Bercy village

Bercy village is near the 'accessible' Line 14 station Cour St Emilion, and there is nearby UG parking with lift access back up to the street. This can either be in Bercy-Terroirs UGCP (*Parking guide* page 183) or under the adjacent park (*Parking guide* page 182).

The village is a place where you'll find trendy boutiques, restaurants, a fitness club, a cinema, concert hall, and more. Open on Sundays and with some pedestrianised areas, and its proximity to the Park, it is a big favourite with families from all over. It is developing quite rapidly, and there are likely to be more attractions in a few years time. It has its own website: www.bercyvillage.com.

Le Cour St Emilion is a lively and compact development in the heart of the Village. There are a good number of restaurants with both step-free access and a wheelchair toilet. The main problem for chair users is that the original cobbles have been retained in many places, making the surface somewhat bumpy. More than half the shops and boutiques have step-free access. It is very near the attractive Bercy park.

There's an open square, the place des Vins de France, and off ave des Terroirs de France there are more shops and the Fairground Museum. In the other direction the Parc de Bercy provides a welcome open space for children, or just for taking a break.

St-Germain-en-Laye

An ideal place for a visit to a small château, just outside Paris. The town alongside is crowded with narrow pavements, but there are lots of cafés and small shops.

The RER station on line A is 'accessible' via a service lift, and the château is only some 200m away across the road. If you come by car, the UGCP has steps up from the final level. If you are going to have problems getting out of the CP, it's probably best to be patient, and wait for a space

in the metered parking at street level; there's a limited amount, but some of it is quite close to the château.

The château itself is almost fully accessible, see the detailed write-up in *Sights outside the Périphérique*. It is probably the most compact château that you can get into in the Paris area and has some interesting exhibits. It has a good wheelchair toilet.

What to do if it's wet

Few cities look at their best when it decides to rain. Additional hazards are created by the traffic slowing down and the difficulty of finding a taxi.

However, there are things that you can do, and several places you might want to go to, where it doesn't really matter whether it rains or not. If you are visiting when the weather is a bit changeable, you might want to save these up for a possible rainy day.

In particular we would recommend the **City of Science and Industry at la Villette**. It offers plenty of variety indoors, and lots of things that will appeal to most children. Access is good and it includes exhibits, films, a planetarium and the unique Géode with its special presentations. There may also be performances, exhibitions or events in the Grande Halle or the Cité de la Musique at the southern end of the area. Have a look at the description in the chapter on *Sights*.

If you are into art, you have a variety of places, with the **Louvre** and the **Musée d'Orsay** top of your list already no doubt. There's also the **Musée du quai Branly**. All have catering facilities and wheelchair toilets. The Orsay and the Branly are more manageable in terms of size, and has a good ambience, good access and well-presented exhibits. The Louvre has its huge underground shopping and eating centre outside the museum, and if you're interested in particular collections it can provide shelter for any number of days! There's also the Navy Museum in the Palais de Chaillot and the Aquarium nearby providing something different. There's a restaurant, and a wheelchair toilet in the Palais de Chaillot. Not far away is the **Musée du Vin** where you can probably while away an hour or three indoors, testing out some of the produce!

The **Georges Pompidou Centre** has a variety of things going on. It has an UGCP park, and the permanent Museum of Modern Art as well as restaurants, cafés and adapted toilets. Not far away is the les Halles centre with a wide variety of both shops and eating places.

