

FREE GUIDE

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France Starter Guide

Your Free Kick-Start to La Belle France

15 attractions · 10 phrases · maps · money hacks

Bonjour, traveller!

This free guide is your shortcut to planning a trip to France that feels effortless. Every attraction has a tap-to-open Google Maps link. Every restaurant is a real spot with real prices. No filler, no fluff — just the things that actually matter.

● **CHAPTER 01**

Top 15 Attractions

With clickable Google Maps links for every single one.

● **CHAPTER 02**

10 Essential Phrases

Say these and watch locals warm up instantly.

● **CHAPTER 03**

Smart Packing List

What to bring — and what to leave at home.

● **CHAPTER 04**

Transport Cheat Codes

Metro, TGV, rideshare — how to move like a local.

● **CHAPTER 05**

5 Budget Restaurants

Real Paris meals under 15 EUR, all linked.

● **CHAPTER 06**

Money-Saving Tips

Free museums, picnic hacks, scam warnings.

Tip: every blue/red underlined link in this PDF is tappable.

Top 15 Attractions

Tap the button on any card to open directions in Google Maps.



● PARIS, 7TH ARR.

01 · Eiffel Tower

Book evening tickets for the sparkling light show every hour on the hour 9pm-1am.

OPEN IN GOOGLE MAPS

● PARIS, 1ST ARR.

02 · Louvre Museum

Enter via the Carrousel du Louvre or Porte des Lions to skip the pyramid queue.

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● PARIS, 18TH ARR.

03 · Sacré-Cœur & Montmartre

Arrive before 9am for crowd-free views. Skip the funicular, climb the steps.

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● VERSAILLES

04 · Palace of Versailles

RER C train from Paris, 40 min. Arrive at opening for Hall of Mirrors solo shots.

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● NORMANDY

05 · Mont Saint-Michel

Stay overnight on the island — magical once the day-trippers leave.

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● FRENCH RIVIERA

06 · Nice & Promenade

Walk the 7km promenade at sunset. Free beaches at Plage Publique.

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● VALENSOLE PLATEAU

07 · Provence Lavender Fields

Peak bloom is late June to mid-July. Best light is 7-9am.

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● FRENCH ALPS

08 · Chamonix & Mont Blanc

Take the Aiguille du Midi cable car — 3,842m summit views of Mont Blanc.

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NORMANDY

09 · D-Day Beaches

Hire a local guide — Omaha, Utah, and Pointe du Hoc in one day.

[OPEN IN GOOGLE MAPS](#)

ALSACE

10 · Strasbourg Old Town

La Petite France quarter is Disney-level cute. December = Christmas markets.

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OCCITANIE

11 · Carcassonne Medieval City

Walk the ramparts at sunset when day crowds leave. Stay inside the walls.

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LOIRE VALLEY

12 · Chambord Château

The most spectacular Loire château. Climb Leonardo da Vinci's double-helix staircase.

[OPEN IN GOOGLE MAPS](#)

PROVENCE

13 · Gorges du Verdon

Rent a pedalo or kayak at Lac de Sainte-Croix. Europe's deepest canyon.

[OPEN IN GOOGLE MAPS](#)

BORDEAUX

14 · Saint-Émilion

UNESCO wine village. Book a château tasting — Clos Fourtet is a favourite.

[OPEN IN GOOGLE MAPS](#)

ARCAÇON BAY

15 · Dune du Pilat

Europe's tallest sand dune (110m). Climb at sunset for Atlantic views.

[OPEN IN GOOGLE MAPS](#)

10 Essential Phrases

You don't need fluency. These 10 unlock smiles and better service.

| French | Pronunciation | Meaning | When to use |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Bonjour | bon-ZHOOR | Hello | Say it every time you enter a shop. |
| Merci beaucoup | mair-see bo-KOO | Thank you very much | Never drop the 'beaucoup'. |
| S'il vous plaît | seel voo PLAY | Please | Magic word – attach it to every request. |
| Excusez-moi | ex-koo-zay MWAH | Excuse me | Getting attention, squeezing past. |
| Parlez-vous anglais ? | par-lay voo ahn-GLAY | Do you speak English? | Ask before switching languages. |
| L'addition, s'il vous plaît | la-dee-SYON seel voo PLAY | The bill, please | Every restaurant, every time. |
| Une carafe d'eau | oon ka-RAFF doh | A jug of tap water | Free water – always ask for it. |
| Je voudrais... | zhuh voo-DRAY | I would like... | Polite ordering at bakeries & cafés. |
| C'est combien ? | say kom-BYEN | How much is it? | Markets, small shops, crêpe stands. |
| Au revoir | oh ruh-VWAR | Goodbye | Always say it leaving a shop – pure politesse. |

Golden rule

Always open with Bonjour before anything else. Skipping it is the #1 reason travellers think Parisians are rude. Say hello first – everything gets warmer.

Smart Packing Checklist

Print this page. Tick as you pack. Travel light.



Documents & Money

- Passport (valid 6+ months from return date)
- Travel insurance – print a copy
- Credit & debit cards (notify your bank!)
- ~100 EUR cash for taxis & small cafés
- Copies of passport, insurance, bookings

Clothing

- Comfortable walking shoes (seriously – cobblestones)
- Light layers – French weather flips fast
- One smart outfit for dinners & churches
- Compact rain jacket or travel umbrella
- A scarf – functional AND instantly more French

Tech & Gadgets

- EU plug adaptor (Type C / E)
- Portable phone charger (10,000 mAh+)
- Offline Google Maps of each city
- Headphones for TGV trains & flights
- Camera or phone with spare storage

Health & Comfort

- Prescription medication + copy of scripts
- Sunscreen & sunglasses (yes, even in winter)
- Reusable water bottle (taps are safe)
- Small first-aid kit: plasters, ibuprofen, wipes
- Hand sanitiser & tissues

Leave behind

Big hairdryers (hotels have them), heels (cobblestones), heavy jeans (bulky), and 3 pairs of 'just in case' shoes. Your back will thank you.

Transport Cheat Codes

France's transport is world-class when you know how to use it.



TGV High-Speed Rail

Book on [SNCF Connect](#) 3 months ahead for fares from €19. ParisLyon in 2h, ParisMarseille in 3h.

Paris Metro

Get a Navigo Easy card (€2) and load a carnet of 10 tickets. Use [Citymapper](#) for live routing — it beats Google Maps for transit.

From Paris Airports

CDG city: RER B (€11.80, 35min) or Roissybus (€16.60). Orly city: Tram 7 + Metro 7, or Orlybus (€11.50). Skip taxis unless you have heavy luggage.

BlaBlaCar Ridesharing

Cheapest way between cities. [BlaBlaCar](#) is huge in France — safe, rated drivers, often half the train price.

FlixBus & BlaBlaBus

Long-haul budget buses from €5. [FlixBus](#) covers every major city. Slower than TGV but ~80% cheaper.

Rental Cars

Essential for Provence, Loire, Dordogne. Book automatic — most French cars are manual. [Rentalcars.com](#) aggregates the best rates.

5 Budget Restaurants in Paris

Real Paris meals that won't break the bank.



● 9TH ARR. · GRANDS BOULEVARDS

Bouillon Chartier

Historic 1896 dining hall. Three courses for ~€20. Queue moves fast. No reservations — go at 5.30pm or 9pm.

[GOOGLE MAPS](#)

[WEBSITE](#)

● 18TH ARR. · PIGALLE

Bouillon Pigalle

Modern bouillon. Classic French starters, mains & desserts at tiny prices. Open noon to midnight.

[GOOGLE MAPS](#)

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● 3RD ARR. · LE MARAIS

Breizh Café

The best galettes (buckwheat crêpes) in Paris, made with organic Breton buckwheat and artisan cider.

[GOOGLE MAPS](#)

[WEBSITE](#)

● 4TH ARR. · LE MARAIS

L'As du Fallafel

The legendary Marais falafel since 1979. Eggplant, hummus and perfect pita. Closed Saturdays.

[GOOGLE MAPS](#)

[WEBSITE](#)

● 9TH ARR. · PIGALLE

Pink Mamma

Italian-French across 4 floors with a glass rooftop. Instagram-famous pasta — book ahead on SevenRooms.

[GOOGLE MAPS](#)

[WEBSITE](#)

Bonus: the Paris rule

If a restaurant is within 100m of the Eiffel Tower, Notre-Dame, or the Louvre — walk 5 minutes away. Prices drop by half and the food gets twice as good.

Money-Saving Tips & Scam Warnings

Small habits, huge savings. And the traps to avoid.

Free museum days

Most national museums (Louvre, Orsay, Pompidou) are free on the 1st Sunday of each month (Oct–Mar).

Free tap water, always

Ask for «une carafe d'eau, s'il vous plaît» — it's free, legal, and safe. Never pay for bottled water at a restaurant.

Boulangerie lunch hack

A fresh jambon-beurre baguette sandwich from any bakery: €4–5. Best cheap lunch in France.

Paris Museum Pass

If you'll hit 3+ museums in 2 days, the Paris Museum Pass pays for itself AND skips ticket queues.

Picnic by the Seine

Buy baguette, cheese, charcuterie, and a €5 bottle of wine. Picnic on the Pont des Arts or Canal Saint-Martin.

Beware the 'free bracelet'

If someone tries to tie a string bracelet on you near Sacré-Cœur — walk away. It's a classic scam.

Petition clipboards = pickpockets

Groups with clipboards asking you to 'sign a petition' at tourist sites are distractions. Keep hands on your bag.

Pay in euros, not your home currency

At card terminals, always choose EUR. 'Pay in USD/GBP' gives you a terrible exchange rate.

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● **PREMIUM**

Wine & Cheese Guide

Region-by-region pairings, tasting tours, and AOC maps.

Bon voyage !

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