

THREE THAT SHINE IN THE “CITY OF LIGHT”

What makes a city “great”? Its history ... culture ... food, perhaps? It’s certainly all of that and, in Paris’ case, much more. It’s difficult to define exactly why Paris perennially ranks among the world’s leading travel destinations, thanks to its intangibly magical aura. If you’ve been to Paris, you probably know what I mean. If not, there’s a lot to look forward to when you go. Like any metropolitan center, it’s the sum of many unequal parts, each with a unique urban flavor and some with more style than others. And you can extend your stay here on either trip or our three-night optional extension—the perfect chance to take a closer look at some of Paris’ most inviting neighborhoods.

Le Marais: Paris Epitomized

Situated on the Right Bank of the Seine, the Marais (which means “swamp”) unifies many of Paris’ best aspects within a single neighborhood. From engaging museums, elegant mansions, and labyrinthine streets, to chic boutiques, quaint cafes, and a burgeoning art scene, this area has it all.

Once a muddy stretch of farmland that reached its aristocratic heyday in the 17th century, the Marais later fell into decay. Following a dramatic revitalization in the 20th century, you’ll now find a compelling blend of historic and contemporary culture. The city’s oldest square—Place des Vosges, built by Henry IV in 1609—remains as regal as ever. And a historic Jewish quarter still thrives here. Meanwhile, it also boasts some of Paris’ most fashionable restaurants, galleries, and residents.

While in the Marais, trace the city’s storied history at the Musée Carnavalet or Picasso’s prolific career at the Musée Picasso. And if you like Moroccan cuisine, Chez Omar on Rue Bretagne specializes in mouth-watering food and gracious service.

St.-Germain-des-Prés: Literature and Luxury

A hub of Existentialism that once drew the likes of Sartre and Camus to its popular cafes, this colorful Left Bank neighborhood in the sixth *arrondissement* (“district”) retains much of that intellectual bohemian character today. Luxury goods, interior design, and antiques shops line many avenues, but St.-Germain is still the heart of Paris’ publishing community—where bookshops, galleries, bistros, and literary landmarks abound.



Parisians can always be found in the city’s many neighborhood cafes. Perhaps you’ll join them during your free time in the “City of Light.”

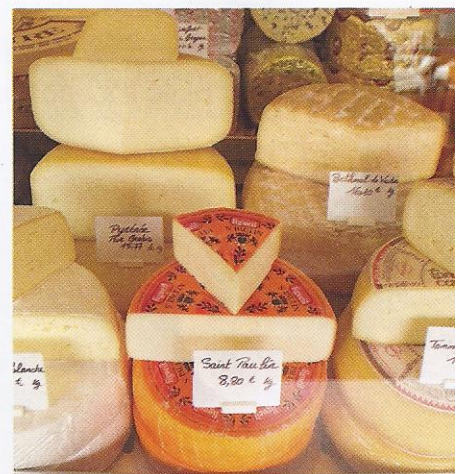
Among the highlights here are the Jardin du Luxembourg—a 60-acre park where Hemingway reputedly caught pigeons to cook in destitute times; two renowned churches, St.-Sulpice and the aptly named St.-Germain-des-Prés; and the Musée National Eugene Delacroix. And for an authentic local experience, pick up a fresh loaf of sourdough bread at the Poilane bakery on Rue du Cherche-Midi, and wander the district’s many glorious gardens, narrow streets, and hidden squares.

Ile St.-Louis: The Past in Repose

As the less-touristy “twin” of Paris’ bustling Ile de la Cite, the nearby Ile St.-Louis is a genuine oasis in the city center. Accessible via the Pont St.-Louis footbridge behind

Notre Dame, it features tree-lined quays, quiet courtyards, and stately 17th-century townhouses and mansions. Many famous Parisian residents once lived here, including Marie Curie, Voltaire, and Honoré Daumier—and some homes are open for tours.

While primarily residential, the historic neighborhood has its share of other attractions as well. Traditional cafes, bakeries, and *fromageries* (“cheese shops”) lend a decidedly village-like atmosphere, while street performers often gather for spontaneous shows. Specialty shops and boutiques offer unique and hand-crafted souvenirs, while a delicious meal is always waiting at one of the many local restaurants. Before shopping, you might visit the stunning St.-Louis en l’Ile Church. And after dining, be sure to enjoy a divine dessert at the island’s renowned Berthillon ice cream shop on Rue St.-Louis en l’Ile.



The village-like Ile St.-Louis has many traditional specialty shops, such as bakeries and *fromageries* like the one shown above.