

A STORY OF STUDENT LIFE ABROAD: PARIS TRAVEL STUDY

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Leaving the Airport

Signs inside the airport will guide you toward two transport options – RER and Taxis. The airport will be fairly easy to navigate, stay aware and you will make your way to your lodging / destination relatively easily.

Choosing a mode of transportation out of CDG will depend on your budget, amount of luggage, and experience or level of comfort with guarding your belongings – you might change your mind at the last minute, but whatever you decide – congratulations, you’ve made it to Paris!



Taxi: The taxi flat rate to and from Charles De Gaulle airport is 55 euros. Although it is the pricier option, it can also be more convenient for a first timer in the city, especially if you have a lot of luggage with you.

RER: You can take the RERB train into the city, which from and to the airport is about 10 euros. There will be some kind of desk or module where you can ask questions about the train and purchase tickets. The RERB has a stop directly opposite Cité Universitaire - if that is your program’s lodging arrangement for you it will be an easy and direct ride there. Be aware of you luggage however, as there can be stairs and gaps that are not very suitcase-friendly.

Adjusting

Jet Lag: This is one of the first hurdles to conquer upon arrival. The 9-hour time difference between Los Angeles and Paris will take its toll on you – plan your flights accordingly. Try to follow your new time zone as much as possible and make sure to get enough sleep. It will nonetheless take a few days for your body to feel normal again – do not be deterred, the feeling will go away eventually!



Walking: Paris is indeed a walking city – it is the best way to explore your surroundings and get a feel for the layout of everything. Bring comfortable shoes. This does not mean your running sneakers necessarily – a comfortable pair of sandals and some casual sneakers will take you far (literally). If you have an iPhone, one fun thing to do after a long day is to check the Health app which tracks the number of steps and miles you have trekked. On average the number of steps will range anywhere from 5 – 15,000!

Being Polite: One key thing to keep in mind about Paris is that unlike Los Angeles, people do not smile at strangers or make eye contact with random people on the street. Simply be polite and give people their space and privacy. People do however, acknowledge each other's existence – be sure to greet people like cashiers, waiters, and security guards upon entering an establishment (*bonjour*), say goodbye once a transaction is complete (*au revoir*) and thank people for their time as well (*merci*).

Lodging / Dorm Life

The travel study program I did arranged our lodging at Cité Universitaire, a large campus / foundation located in Paris' 14th arrondissement which is on the left bank, south of landmarks like the Eiffel Tower and the Musée du Louvre. Their website includes some photos and further information – <http://www.ciup.fr/en/home/living/> .

If this is your program's housing arrangement as well, you will most likely receive a map of the campus that shows you the location of every *maison* – when in doubt you can walk straight in through the main entrance and easily find someone who speaks English to ask for help.

Your stay in the city of Paris, while magical and enriching, will also involve some basic housekeeping activities – below are some tips on navigating chores.

Laundry: The Maison des Provinces de France – where my summer travel study program was housed – has a laundry room on the ground floor, similarly to dorm buildings on the UCLA campus. Payment is made in coins – washers are about 3 euros and dryers are free. Doing laundry means of course, purchasing things like detergent and fabric softener. I would advise to share these things, as you are very unlikely to finish a whole bottle on your own (depending on the length of your particular program).

Cooking Meals / Purchasing Utensils: The Maison also has two kitchens on every floor – one on each side of the hallway. If you make friends that are assigned rooms on your same floor, it might work to your advantage to share things like pots and pans. However, this depends on whether your meal times in the dorms are social affairs or you prefer to leave that for meals out. Either way some basic things you might need are: at least one pot for cooking things like rice or soups, utensils like a fork and spoon, a knife for cutting fruits and vegetables, and some kind of bowl or plastic container for serving and / or storing food.

Washing Dishes: You are going to need soap to wash the dishes and pots you use to cook meals in the dorm kitchens. Similarly to doing laundry, I would advise sharing things like larger bottles of dish soap if possible, in order to minimize waste and unnecessary spending.



Getting to Know the City

Public Transportation: On orientation day, our professor handed us metro cards that lasted the length of the program. These cards can also be purchased at most metro stations – they allow you to take as many trains or buses as you need!



1. **Metro:** The metro will most likely be your main mode of transportation in Paris aside from walking. It is much easier to navigate than the metro in Los Angeles – much more efficient and reliable as well. Google Maps will help you to find the best route (this applies to all the modes of public transport) to any location and once you find the nearest station from your lodging place (ours was the Port d'Orléans one down the street from Cité U) you'll be taking the metro with ease and confidence all over the city.
2. **RER:** The RER travels within as well as outside of the city – remember it is the train that takes you to the airport. It probably will not be your first choice but it is good to keep it in mind as it closes later than the metro and has a stop right across the street from the main Cité Universitaire entrance.

Tip: Don't get stuck in any automatic doors! A buzzing sound indicates when the train or metro doors are about to close, pay attention to them and don't overestimate your speed.

3. **Tram Line:** The tram also ends its service later in the night than the metro. During my program I only ever used the T2 line of the tram. It runs within the city limits – above ground but a bit slower than the metro.
4. **Buses:** The city buses run less often than the metro but similarly to the trams have the benefit of running above ground and hence, you can look at the city while you travel. I would at least give the buses a try, although keep in mind they are smaller so will be more convenient for solo travel than large groups.

My Favorite Things:

There are many other things to discover and love about Paris outside of this account – things that you'll have fun discovering on your own. However, I'd like to sign off with a quick list of my favorite things and memories of the city.

1. The Seine at sunset.
2. Luxembourg Gardens.
3. The view from the roof of Galleries Lafayette on Haussmann.
4. Buying a warm baguette.
5. Walking through Le Marais.
6. Boat rides on the Seine.
7. Seeing the Louvre for the first time.
8. Shakespeare & Co.
9. Farmers market figs.
10. Pistachio sorbet at Amorino gelato.
11. Walking through the Paris flea market.
12. And finally, making friends with whom you can forever talk about that summer in Paris.

