

A typical afternoon

Every couple of months for a few years in the early and mid-1990s I stayed at a small place called Hotel Louvre Saint-Honoré (which is today a Best Western hotel), on a quiet street a block from the Louvre Museum and the Louvre-Rivoli Métro station. Because this was roughly in the center of town, I would catch the RER suburban train at Airport Charles de Gaulle and take it to Châtelet, the central RER station across the Seine from Île de la Cité, one of the river's two islands. Then I would hop on the Métro Line 1 for the two or three stops it took to get to Louvre-Rivoli. I was a regular. I would walk into the tiny lobby with my bag and the pretty girl behind the desk would look up and say, "*Bonjour Monsieur Barrie!*"

A little later, as the Hotel Louvre Saint-Honoré got more and more expensive, I began to stay at the even smaller Hotel Acacias in a very old building on rue du Temple in the Marais area, a couple Métro stops from Châtelet in the opposite direction, only about a ten or fifteen minute walk from my former hotel.

Anyway, for a long time I stayed right in the middle of town, on the Right Bank of the Seine. I would typically arrive (from London) in the early evening or late afternoon, and after dropping my bag at my hotel, I would walk across the river to the Île de la Cité, the site of Notre-Dame de Paris and Sainte-Chapelle, the national police headquarters, a flower market, and many posh apartments. I would continue strolling to the opposite side of the island and across the Pont (bridge) Saint-Michel to the Place Saint-Michel, which is really nothing more than a busy intersection with one side open to the river bank, a sort of gateway to the Latin Quarter. Then I would find an outside (terrace) table at a brasserie with a red awning on the southeast corner of the *place* called Le Depart Saint-Michel, and order a beer (my favorite French beer is a light but sweet lager called Kronenbourg 1664 (*seize soixante-quatre*, but since it's the most popular beer in France, you can also order it by asking for "*une seize*." Or you can simply order a draft beer (which is likely to be 1664 anyway) by asking for *bière pression*. Or you can order the house red wine (*vin rouge de la maison*, *vin de la maison*, or just *vin rouge*), either by the glass (*un verre*) or in a *carafe* or *pinchet*, which is the better value).

And then I would just sit there for a while, sipping my beer. Usually I had a book or the latest *Economist* to absorb my attention, so I could ignore all the hustle and bustle of the foot and automobile traffic in the *place*; but every once in a while I would look up and watch people or gaze across the Quai Saint-Michel to the Île de la Cité. Place Saint-Michel is a noisy intersection that doesn't offer much of a view (Notre-Dame is behind you, in the opposite direction, as you sit at your table on the brasserie terrace); there are certainly much more quiet and pleasant cafes and brasseries in Paris where you can catch your breath; but for some reason Le Depart Saint-Michel became my habit. It was the first place I went to once I arrived in town.

After I finished my beer, I would get up and move down the Quai Saint-Michel along the river and cross back to the Île de la Cité to inspect Notre-Dame, which never disappoints. If I didn't head off to stroll along the Île Saint-Louis (the neighboring upriver island, mostly apartments for the wealthy, and so much quieter than the Île de la Cité), I'd circle around the island back to Pont au Change and, crossing it, find myself back on the Right Bank at the bottom of a pedestrian street called rue Saint-Denis. North of rue de Rivoli, rue Saint-Denis is full of bars and restaurants, the heart of the Marais district. Rue Saint-Denis, and rue des Lombards, which crosses it, were often my nighttime bases of operations in Paris.

While the avenue des Champs-Élysées is the most famous street in the world and the main shopping and nightlife boulevard in Paris, I never spent much time there, except to get from one part of the city to another. These days it is full of McDonalds and Nike shops and a lot of other retail outlets you can find in any other big city (or big city airport).

Gare du Nord, the North Train Station, was my usual access to Paris in 1999-2000. Either I was taking the train from Brussels or London; or flying to Airport Charles de Gaulle and taking the RER into town to stay at a hotel near the Gare du Nord. When I started working for Reef in Paris itself, our first office was on rue de Dunkerque, just up the street from the train station (at the bottom of Montmartre). Later we moved to a building a short distance away on rue du Faubourg Saint-Martin at boulevard de Magenta, which is just south of the other big train station in north Paris, the Gare de l'Est (East Train Station). I and my colleagues stayed in one of a couple nearby tourist hotels.

One of the reasons I recommend visiting Paris in the late spring or summer, despite the crowds, is because many of the boulevards are lined with leafy plane trees which of course are bare in the winter. One of my most memorable Paris moments was a day in, I think, April 2000, when I took the Thalys high-speed train down into town after spending a number of dreary cold weeks in dreary cold Brussels. I'd lived part of the winter in a gray, windy, leafless Paris. You don't see much of a city from the train, it snakes into town through gritty alleys between factories and big apartment blocks. My train stopped in Gare du Nord and I carried my bag through the pedestrian tunnels beneath rue de Dunkerque and up the stairs into bright sunshine and gorgeous green leaves. I wasn't prepared for it. It was wonderful. I will never forget that. It was springtime and I was back in Paris!

I walked a lot when I work at Reef, and walking around is my favorite thing to do in Paris. It is a city for walking. Almost every direction you look in the middle of Paris there is a convenient café or brasserie with an outside terrace, where you can stop and rest and enjoy a glass of wine or beer. And then, refreshed, get up and continue on your walk. This can go on for hours and days.

The following pages describe some of the places where I would walk, and where I would sometimes stop walking.

Arrondissements

It's useful to understand how Paris is laid out and divided into twenty *arrondissements* arranged like a snail or nautilus shell, starting with the 1st Arrondissement on the Right Bank of the Seine in the center of Paris, and spiraling clockwise outward. The Seine itself almost bisects the city, flowing roughly east to west so that in the center of town the north bank is the Right Bank (*rive droit*) when facing downstream, and the southern bank is the Left Bank (*rive gauche*).

Each *arrondissement* has a city hall and a mayor, and the buildings, called Hôtels-de-Ville, are styled after the big main Paris Hôtel-de-Ville by the Seine at the bottom of rue du Temple. I gather one of the main functions of an *arrondissement* mayor is to officiate



at weddings, and so you might see people preparing for weddings near Hôtels-de-Ville all over town, especially on Saturday.

Personally, I spent almost all my time in the Paris in the 1st through 6th Arrondissements, right in the center of town, except when visiting the Eiffel Tower, Montmartre and other attractions elsewhere in the city; and when working at Reef and staying in the 10th Arrondissement.

1st Arrondissement: (Louvre)

This where I stayed during the early 1990s, in the Hotel Louvre Saint-Honoré, which was a block or so away from the big Louvre museum. The museum, of course, is a big draw for visitors to Paris, but after going inside once many years ago I've never gone back. As you can imagine, it's extremely crowded, and I don't like crowds, especially when looking at paintings and sculpture.

Just west of the Louvre, which was originally a royal palace, is the highly formal Tuileries Garden (Jardin des Tuileries), which is the eastern anchor for the axis formed by the Champs-Élysées through the Arc de Triomphe along the avenue Charles de Gaulle all the way to the Grande Arche de La Défense five miles away.

My favorite area for bars and restaurants, around where rue Saint-Denis, and rue des Lombards intersect, is at the southeastern edge of the 1st Arrondissement.

2nd Arrondissement: (Bourse)

"*Bourse*" is French for stock market, and so this is sort of the central financial district of Paris, which means the 2nd Arrondissement is mostly deserted at night. The important commercial avenue de l'Opéra begins in the 1st Arrondissement and crosses through a corner of the 2nd.

3rd Arrondissement: (Temple)

This is the Marais ("swamp"), a very old part of the city where the buildings often tilt into each other. The Hotel Acacias, where I later stayed when the Hotel Louvre Saint-Honoré got too expensive, didn't have a single right angle or straight wall. The Marais has also become something of a gay district, or so I'm told. I do know there was a gay bar on rue du Temple across the street from Hotel Acacias that used to be pretty noisy all night.

4th Arrondissement: (Hôtel-de-Ville)

The 4th encompasses most of the île de la Cité and all of the île Saint-Louis, as well as one or two of Paris' famous big department stores, and so is a little posh. The distinctive Hôtel-de-Ville (city hall) itself, rebuilt around 1880 after being burned by the Paris Commune of 1871, is a useful landmark on the bank of the Seine.

5th Arrondissement (Panthéon) and 6th Arrondissement (Luxembourg)

These two *arrondissements* comprise the Latin Quarter ("*Quartier Latin*" *en Francaise*), another very old part of Paris. It is called the Latin Quarter because there are still ruins there from when Paris was a Roman outpost. It is also the home of several important universities including the Sorbonne, so it is famous for student life and bohemian culture. The Latin Quarter is generally what people allude to when they refer to the offbeat and artistic culture of the Left Bank. It's a fun place to wander around and enjoy the café terraces, shops, bookstores and restaurants.

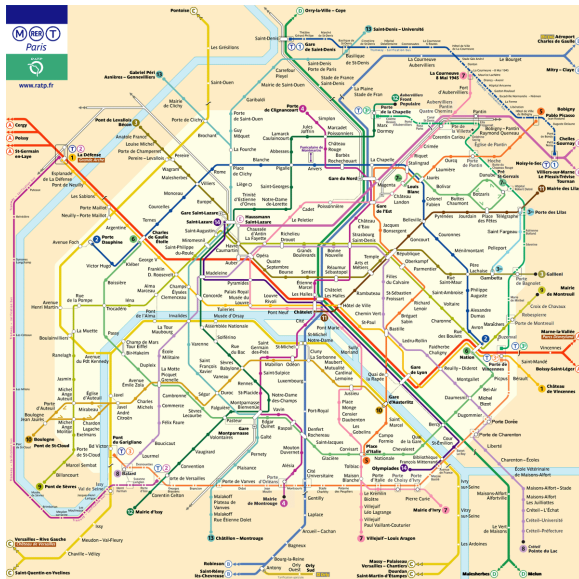
Paris Métro

The Paris Métro is so convenient you *will* find yourself using it if you spend much time in Paris.

An advantage of the Métro compared to similar systems in other cities is that there is only one ticket price (€1.90), and a single ticket will take you anywhere in the system; so you don't have to stand in front of the ticket machine agonizing over how much ticket you have to buy to get to where you want to go. Just buy a ticket and you're off.

What I prefer to do instead of buying one ticket at a time is to buy a *carte* of ten tickets (€16.90 these days; "*Un carnet, s'il vous plait,*" at the window, or you can use a vending machine). When you buy a

carte, you always have a ticket and can jump into the Métro at any time, without having to worry about getting tickets. Pick up a pocket map of the Métro while you are purchasing your *carte*.



I believe the Métro tickets can also be used on buses (one ticket per trip, cancel the ticket in the little stamping machine as you board the bus). However, the Métro and the RER (suburban railway) are different systems, and they use different tickets. You would only ever use the RER to get to and from the airport, or to get to Versailles, and you can go to the RER window to find out what tickets you need.

While the map looks like a mess, it's actually very easy to get around on the Métro, and you don't even need to speak French. Each train line is numbered

and color-coded, and each line has two terminuses, one at each end. All you need to know to use the Métro is the line number you want and the direction you are heading (which terminus). On the map, interchange stations (where you can get off one line connect onto another) are white circles or oblongs. Regular stations are small solid circles.

For example, suppose you are in the center of town near Châtelet station and want to get to Trocadéro to visit the Eiffel Tower. From the map you can easily see the most direct route would be to take Line 1 to the Franklin D Roosevelt station and connect to Line 9 to take it to Trocadéro:

- In the big Châtelet station, look for the M and orange 1 on the overhead signs and follow them to Line 1, then get on the platform for direction La Défense (the northwestern terminus of Line 1).
- Franklin D Roosevelt is the fifth stop in this direction on Line 1.
- Get off the train and look for the olive colored 9 for Line 9, and wait for the train on the platform for direction Pont de Sèvres, (the southwestern terminus of Line 9).
- Trocadéro will be the third stop. *Sortie* means "exit."

Once you pass the turnstiles to get into the system, you can move around however you want until you pass the turnstiles to get out. This means if you discover you made a mistake or went past your stop, you can simply get off at the next stop and cross over to the opposite platform and go back the direction whence you came, if necessary. You don't need another ticket.

If you are still confused, simply ask another passenger for help. Just make sure you at least attempt to ask in French and begin with an "*Excusez-moi, s'il vous plait.*" It is likely the Parisian speaks some English herself and will do so once she realizes you're American; but in any case the locals are almost always happy to assist bewildered tourists, if they are polite. Always finish with a "*Merci!*"

It's really very easy.

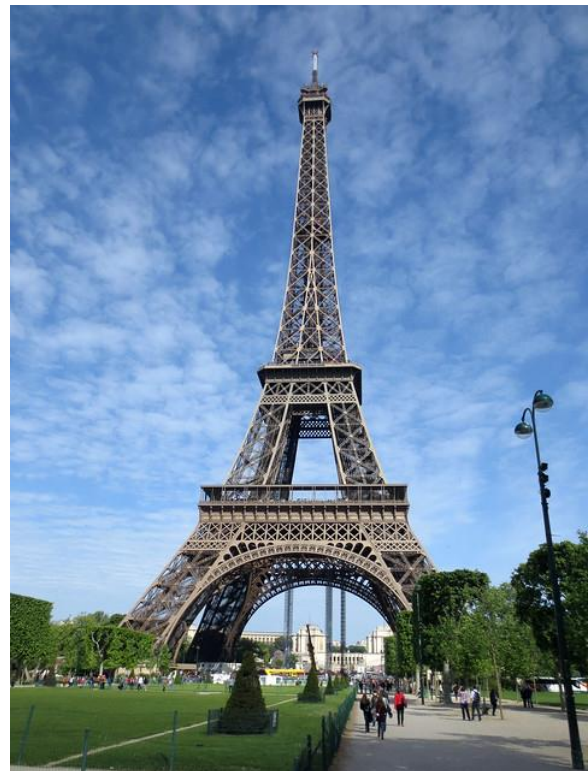
La Tour Eiffel (7th)

Every first-time visitor has to stop at the Eiffel Tower, I suppose. I visited the Tower whenever I was in Paris with a friend or family member who'd never been there before.

The "official" Métro stop for the Eiffel Tower is Bir-Hakeim, which is the closest, but back in the day you had to walk around the old Paris Hilton to get to the Tower and anyway it was a boring walk. I see now there seems to be a pedestrian subway from the Bir-Hakeim station to a spot presumably closer to the Tower. Nonetheless, for my money the Eiffel Tower is best approached from the far end of the Champ de Mars (formerly the military college parade grounds, now a grassy park); or from the Palais de Chaillot and Jardins du Trocadéro across the river. These provide a much more dramatic reveal to the most iconic and famous man-made landmark on the planet.

I already described how to get to Trocadéro in the previous section. The Palais de Chaillot is a complex of museums at the top of a hill above the Seine. As you approach the crest of the little concrete plaza between the two wings of museums, the Tower looms in front you, across the river, the biggest thing you've ever seen. There is famous photograph of Hitler standing at this spot in June 1940 surveying the recently conquered Paris. Make your way down through the daredevil rollerbladers in the Jardins du Trocadéro and across the Pont d'Iéna to visit the Tower.

The alternative method is to come from the opposite direction, by catching the Métro to the stop for Ecole Militaire (Military Academy). I would do this early in the morning, stopping for a coffee and a *pain au chocolat* at the Café de l'Ecole Militaire. You can't see anything from the café terrace, it faces across the street towards the Military Academy. But after you pay and get up and cross the street, walk down the avenue de la Motte-Picquet and come around the trees onto the Champ de Mars, *boom!* The Tower rises in the distance at the other end of the park, about a half mile away, getting bigger and bigger with every step you take toward it.



What to do at the Eiffel Tower? Well, you can go up inside it. There are two ways to get to the first floor, stairs or elevator. I have always taken the stairs, which is over 300 steps to the first floor, and a

similar climb to the second floor (674 steps total). I used the stairs because it's the manly thing to do, and also because there usually wasn't a queue for the stairs (the queue for the elevators snakes around and around forever). But that changed during my last visit in 2012, as we had to wait at least a half hour just to get to the stairs, and we arrived early. I still have no idea what the wait is normally to take the elevators, but I'm sure it's well over an hour in the summer.

To get from the second floor to the top, you must take the elevators.

Parvis de Notre-Dame (4th)

The cathedral of Notre-Dame has always been a destination for me, but I believe I have only ever been inside once or twice (and I expect it will be closed for months or years while the roof is repaired). I just like walking around the building, enjoying the park-like setting by the river, and contemplating it quietly from a bench, if possible, and it might not be possible in spring or summer, because of the crowds.

When I was working in Paris, I sometimes walked across the Île de la Cité in the evening and find a seat at the edge of the *parvis*, the big square in front of the floodlit cathedral. It was quiet then, with no one around. I don't know where the tourists went at night, but they sure didn't hang around the *parvis de Notre-Dame*. One night as I sat in the darkness I heard the clipping of high heels moving diagonally across the *parvis*, and saw a young woman in a skirt carrying a baguette home to her nearby apartment. That was always such a special moment for me, thinking about how this woman lived in the shadow of Notre-Dame, and crossed before its timeless façade every day during her commute to and from work. If she was religious, she would have attended mass every Sunday in her local parish church, the *Cathedrale Notre-Dame de Paris*.

The last time I was in Paris the *parvis* was covered with a tent and mobs of people. There was no question of finding a quiet bench to sit and observe the gargoyles and flying buttresses. However, one of my favorite diversions in the city is the Archeological Crypt of the Parvis of Notre-Dame, a small museum beneath the square that can be entered from the opposite end of the *parvis* from the cathedral. Back in the 1960s or 1970s, a road tunnel and parking garage was excavated under the *parvis*, and the foundations of medieval and even Roman-era buildings were discovered (ancient Parisii was first settled in the Île de la Cité which, as an island in the Seine, was easily defended). These remains were preserved for viewing and interpretation in the on-site museum and I never get tired of visiting them. And no matter how crowded and noisy the square above might be, there are never more than a handful of people inside the museum, I think because the entrance is not very grand, and not really easy to find unless you are searching for it and know where to look. It's just a stairway into the crypt, with a sign along the wall. I wandered down there by accident myself, the first time.

If there is no tent on the *parvis*, you can walk along outlines set into the pavement of the original medieval streets that were present when the cathedral was built. The medieval city came right up to the front steps of the church; in those days you couldn't really see the whole structure from anywhere except across the river. This is because the cathedral wasn't erected for people to admire, it was built for the glory of God.

If Notre-Dame is closed and you want to visit the inside of a beautiful gothic cathedral, Sainte-Chapelle, a couple blocks away from Notre-Dame, was a private chapel for French kings and has the most

elaborate stained glass in the city. I believe you have to buy a ticket to enter (unlike a normal cathedral), and of course there is an entrance queue outside and mobs inside.

Rue Montorgueil (1st)

For centuries Les Halles was the main marketplace for Paris, and today there's a multi-level shopping mall there. Most of the old market has been turned into a park named after Nelson Mandela. Les Halles is central and easy to find, and is the first stop when looking for rue Montorgueil, a high-end market street of old and elegant shops. I believe rue Montorgueil has been pedestrianized, so it's a pleasant shady stroll with lots of exotic scents.

It's a short, narrow street, and you find it by walking along the northern edge of Les Halles to the big gothic Église (church of) Saint-Eustache. Walk around to the right of the church, and rue Montorgueil is the second street running north out of Les Halles.

My favorite restaurant in Paris is on rue Montorgueil and was called Brin de Zinc when I first visited it in the mid-1990s. It had another name when I was last there with my parents in 2003 and Ingrid in 2012, but I think it's now called L'Escargot Montorgueil at 38 rue Montorgueil. If this is the right one, it's been in business since 1832 and featured a very traditional French country cuisine, with the daily offerings written on chalkboards hung around the interior of the restaurant. Today, according to their website, they seem to specialize in escargots, but still have a complete *carte* (what we call "menu," though in France a *menu* is different from a *carte*. The *carte* is simply a listing of everything available (the American "menu"), but a *menu* in France represents a two (*entrée* and *plat*) or three (*entrée*, *plat* and *dessert*) or more course meal, typically special for the day. This is why, if you don't want the complete *menu* meal, you order individual items *à la carte*; though generally you should try to order the *menu*. Fancier restaurants like L'Escargot Montorgueil often don't have a *menu*, nor do they have a *vin de la maison* (see next section)).

Canal Saint-Martin (10th and 11th)



To get to the Canal Saint-Martin at lunchtime, I would walk down the rue des Vinaigriers from boulevard de Magenta, often stopping at the *boulangerie* at the corner of rue Lucien Sampaix to pick up a ham and cheese sandwich (fresh ham, gruyere cheese and butter on a baguette). Everyone else in the neighborhood was doing the same thing, so I had to stand in line, but the queue went fast. Then I would continue down rue des Vinaigriers to the canal. It's a working canal and there is a lock at the end of the street.

Each lock features a small tree-shaded park, and this was always a pleasant place to sit and read and eat my sandwich.

On the way to the canal I passed on my left a tiny country-style restaurant called Le Bourgogne (26 Rue des Vinaigriers), where I enjoyed simple, delicious meals. This is my second favorite restaurant in Paris, a small quiet hole in the wall where you can sit down and order a *carafe* (or *pinchet*) of the *vin de la*

maison and the *menu* for the day without having to think much about it. You typically find *vin de la maison* in the more modest establishments, and unlike what you might expect in the US, the house wine is usually very good, and a very good value. I think French *restaurateurs* take pride in their house wines, which is why they are often so excellent. Though it is not famous or especially popular, Le Bourgogne is tiny, and as the evening wore on people would often mill around outside waiting for a table. As an American, I never had to wait for a table because I was used to eating much earlier than most Europeans, so I typically showed up for dinner well before the small crowds gathered; in fact, usually not long after the place opened for the evening.

Anyway, the Canal Saint-Martin is one of those hidden gems of Paris the tourists probably never see. You can stroll down the canal toward the Seine, following working canal boats and encountering the occasional lock and its accompanying mini-park. Eventually the canal enters a long tunnel, and emerges again near the Bastille.

Montmartre (18th)

Montmartre is a tall hill in the northern section of the city, long famous for being an artists' colony. Until sometime in the 19th century, it would have been just outside of town, and many of the old buildings still have a quaint country flavor to them. The views from the Basilique du Sacre-Coeur, a relatively modern cathedral at the top of the hill, are spectacular, especially around sunset. There are also a couple squares at the top that are lined with painters and caricature artists, plus many small brasseries and cafes. I once had a dinner of crêpes in one of them and was joined in my meal by the affectionate house cat, because France.

I used to walk up the hill from Reef's first office on rue de Dunkerque near the Gare du Nord, about a mile. You can also start climbing the steps to the top from Pigalle, which is one of the red light districts of Paris and not a very nice area (you will probably see a lot of graffiti spray-painted on walls around Pigalle). There is also a funicular railway up the hill not far from the Anvers Métro station (I believe it costs a Métro ticket to ride).

I really love Montmartre; it's one of my very favorite spots in Paris. Sadly, Montmartre is also a popular tourist destination, and huge motor coaches drive up the back side of the hill and disgorge hordes of tourists into the squares at the top. Fortunately the crowds thin as the sun goes down, so you might be able to enjoy a few relatively peaceful moments gazing down across the City of Light at the end of the day.



Arc de Triomphe and Place Charles De Gaulle (8th, 16th and 17th)

The Place Charles De Gaulle is a huge traffic circle where eleven major boulevards meet, including the Champs-Élysées, dominated in the center by the gigantic Arc de Triomphe celebrating Napoleon's



victories. Because cars already in the traffic circle must yield to incoming vehicles on the European Continent (the opposite of the US and the UK), and because Latin drivers are crazy anyway, the traffic circle itself can provide hours of entertainment.

There is a small museum at the top of the Arc de Triomphe, as well as an open air observation deck from which you can monitor the near-carnage in the traffic circle. I have literally spent as much as a half-hour up there, just watching the madness below. Look for one of several pedestrian tunnels to safely cross the traffic circle to get to the center; many tourists are unaware of these tunnels and attempt to dash across the traffic, which makes the spectacle from the top all the more entertaining.

Back in the day it was a simple thing to get up into the Arc de Triomphe to watch the show, since the museum itself is very small and not much of an attraction for tourists. But again, as with so many

things in Paris, it finally has been discovered, and in 2012 there was a long queue outside the entrance, so we didn't go in. I doubt people are lining up to watch the traffic as I did, but maybe they are. On the other hand, it is one of the tallest structures in central Paris, and the observation deck offers nice views of the city.

Harry's New York Bar (5 rue Daunou, 2nd)

I've spent a lot of time in many bars all over the world, and I am pretty sure my two favorites are Specs' Twelve Adler Museum in North Beach, San Francisco; and Harry's New York Bar in Paris.

For me, Harry's, the birthplace of the Bloody Mary, is pretty much the perfect bar. It was also Ernest Hemingway's favorite. It is said that when Hemingway was a war correspondent in the summer of 1944 during the Liberation of Paris, he was one of the first Americans to enter the city, and the first place he stopped was Harry's. I believe the bar has changed very little since Hemingway drank there.

While I understand it gets pretty crowded and loud late at night when Parisians like to party, earlier in the evening when I prefer to enjoy my *bière pression*



it is always quiet, very mellow, which is kind of amazing for one of the most famous bars in the world. The time-darkened paneled walls are festooned with American college pennants from one hundred years ago, and the ceiling is smoky worked copper. The last time I was there a friendly cat appeared on the bench next to me and presented his belly for scratching.

Parc des Buttes-Chaumont (19th)

After a few days in Paris I find I need a break from the noise and the action, which is one reason I enjoy visiting the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont, an island of green country quiet in the middle of the bustling city. It is one of two European city parks that inspired the designers of Disneyland (the other is the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen).

The centerpiece of the park is the artificial 19th century *butte* or cliff with grottos and waterfalls (which I have never seen working), topped by a belvedere providing views of Montmartre, among other points of interest. The *butte* is surrounded by a lake and connected to the mainland by picturesque footbridges. There are also concrete paths winding through wooded hillsides and grassy slopes.

The Hôtel-de-Ville (city hall) for the 19th Arrondissement is across the street from the park, and on Saturdays especially you often see formally-dressed wedding parties strolling along the lake, waiting for their turn to exchange vows before the mayor.

I would be very surprised if the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont appears in any tourist guides to the city (I first learned about it many years ago in a book about Disneyland); it seems to be a place primarily enjoyed by locals. It also might seem odd to suggest one spend one's limited time in Paris loafing around in a park; but Paris is a loud and dynamic city, and it is often refreshing or even necessary to get away from all the clamor for a while, to enjoy the peace of relative solitude, green grass and still waters.

Luxembourg Gardens (6th)

Another island of relative peace in the middle of a throbbing city is the Jardin du Luxembourg, in the Latin Quarter on the Left Bank. This is a much larger park, laid out in the formal geometry of the 17th century. There are more people here, but the park is big enough to accommodate many uses. There are bronze and marble sculptures placed around the park, and a large wading pool where children of all ages race sailboats.

La Défense

The architecture of central Paris is restricted to the predominate Belle Epoch style, or older, with few buildings more than six stories tall (there are exceptions, such as the 58-storey Tour Montparnasse and the massive Centre Pompidou, which you will see if you go strolling around rue Saint-Denis; I don't know how or why these bizarre exceptions were permitted).

Beginning in the late 1950s, more modern construction was begun at the northwest edge of the city, just across the river at the end of what is now called avenue Charles de Gaulle, along the axis formed by the Louvre and the avenue Champs Elysées. In the subsequent decades this area grew into what is essentially a highly modern commercial annex to the more tradition-minded city. Planners have managed to successfully preserve the essential historical character of the most beautiful city in the

world, while at the same time nurturing the development of an adjacent but unobtrusive enclave of high rises and other modern structures.

The development is called La Défense, after the name of a sculpture that was erected in the area in 1883. Easily accessed from central Paris by riding the Métro Line 1 all the way to the end, it is a vast pedestrian zone, as all automobile and truck access is from tunnels below the plazas and squares between the office buildings and auditoriums. Because it is mostly an office complex, it is largely deserted at night (though I believe some of the buildings are residential).

Since La Défense is basically a giant office development, it's hard to suggest it as a destination for Paris tourists; there are much more interesting parts of the city to spend your limited time. But I have taken first-time visitors there from time to time, and they are usually pretty impressed. It's a very good example of successful urban planning, of which at least in the US there are few similarly effective instances.

But it's probably not what you flew halfway around the world to Paris to see.