

Paris: Part II

How to skip the line at the Eiffel Tower and some dining tips

By Mike Cohen
The Suburban

PARIS, FRANCE – When planning our trip to Paris we warned that getting up to the top of the historic Eiffel Tower (www.tour-eiffel.fr) without booking your exact day and timeslot at least six months in advance would be a difficult task. We found out about this too late. Not interested in standing in line for two hours we sought out alternatives and chose one that enabled us to not only reach the second level immediately, but enjoy the outstanding view over dinner.

This was all made possible by securing reservations at The Jules Verne Restaurant (<http://www.lejulesverne-paris.com>), which is part of the Alain Ducasse culinary empire (<http://www.alain-ducasse.com>). Not only did we experience a five course meal, but we had a private door to enter and exit the viewing platform whenever we wished. Upon arrival at the South Pillar, we gave our names to the host who sent us up on a private elevator 125 metres above. While regular patrons had to wait seemingly endlessly to go back down at the end of the night, we did so in minutes. In order to get the window table we had, one needs to reserve at least three months in advance. We could have bought tickets from there to go to the very top, but frankly take my advice – it is really not worth the long wait.

There is now a “tasting” menu, allowing you to experience the full Jules Verne sensation. For dinner it is 185 euros for five courses (meat or fish) or 230 euros for six. We chose the former and it included Bellevue Style blue lobster, with gold caviar; preserved duck foie gras; roasted marinated baby artichokes; seared sea bass or free range chicken fricassee; and some delicious desserts.

Le Jules Verne’s unique location makes it the Parisian venue par excellence. The wine list features a selection of the finest French wines from the country’s greatest regions. We actually got to first view the Eiffel Tower twice through alternative options: the Bateaux Mouches boat tour of the Seine River and the Hop On, Hop Off Bus Tour

For our first night in Paris, we opted to experience the Bateaux-Mouches (<http://www.bateaux-mouches.fr/en>). There are daily departures throughout the day and in the evening. You can choose the dinner or simple tour options. We chose the latter and did so on a gorgeous evening. The experience allowed us to discover all of the magic of the banks of the River Seine.

The famous hop-on, hop-off bus tours

(<http://eng.bigbustours.com/paris/home.html>), operated by the Cars Rouges, allows you to explore the city's top tourist attractions at your own pace. From the Eiffel Tower to the historic grounds of Le Louvre, no visit to Paris would be complete without taking in the city's sights by bus and via the two day package we chose. Throughout the ticket validity period, you can hop-on and off the buses at any of the Big Bus stops. It is best to buy your tickets online, but you can also do so on site at any bus stop from a uniformed agent.

INTERESTING DINING EXPERIENCES

I must have spent hours looking for just the right restaurant to “sandwich” in before the Moulin Rouge and the Koff Delicatessen (www.koff-paris.fr) at 15 Rue la Vieuville won out.

I would strongly recommend Koff. The husband and wife team of David and Jade designed this place like a New York deli. The menu features bagels, burgers, quesadillas, nachos, sandwiches, smoked salmon, and a nice variety of salads. It is open for lunch and dinner. The Sunday brunch is very popular. I must say that I very much enjoyed the pastrami club sandwich, accompanied by delicious hash browns. Friendly servers Mathilda and Marvin offered us their homemade cheesecake or banoffee pie for dessert, but we were full from the main course. Koff is just one minute's walk from Abbesses métro station (line 12). The décor here is very American, in terms of canvases, signs, metallic advertisement placards and other paraphernalia. Each of the chairs represent an iconic American figure.

Here is one more unique restaurant you will want to try called Breakfast in America (<http://www.breakfast-in-america.com>). There are two locations: in the heart of the historic Latin Quarter, not far from the Sorbonne and Notre Dame and in the Marais district, near rue des Rosiers, the famous Jewish quarter. It is owned not surprisingly by an American, Craig Carlson. We experienced the Marais locale known as BIA2.

Breakfast in America is famous for breakfast which we enjoyed for our first “supper.” It is also known for being one of the best places in Paris for burgers! What dishes are the most popular? At BIA, some favorites include: blueberry pancakes with real maple syrup, the Connecticut omelet, two by two, locally-baked bagels, their own "BIA Burger" and "Super BIA Burger," California chicken wrap, vegetarian wrap, homemade chili con carne, club sandwich, cheesecake, real milkshakes and much,



The Eiffel Tower all lit up at night.

M. CHAZEAU PHOTO



Le Jules Verne Restaurant offers a fabulous view of Paris.

PIERRE MONETTA PHOTO

much more! There are toasters at each booth.

SHOPPING EXPERIENCES

For the youngest member of our travel party, the Teen Shopping and Fashion Accessories Tour in Paris ended up being the first choice after we reviewed the endless array of opportunities on the Viator (www.viator.com) website. Their team of travel insiders are obsessed with finding the best things to do everywhere folks travel. From their offices around the globe, a team of travel insiders handpick the best local tour and activity providers. Viator officials pre-vet them all to make sure you always have an exceptional experience.

For girls who are you looking for something that just screams "I got this in Paris," the Teen Shopping and Fashion Accessories tour is a great choice.. You'll visit places known only to the savviest Parisian teenagers, and find the hippest French brands on this three-hour shopping tour. It's no wonder this tour is such a hit with teenagers and moms!

Sandra Hoyois, from Not A Tourist Destination Tours, leads this Paris shopping tour and shop for fabulous

bags (everyday handbags, dressy handbags, funky handbags, backpacks, side packs), terrific shoes (tennis shoes, dressy shoes, flat shoes, heels, boots, sandals) and the greatest jewelry ever (delicate necklaces, unique earrings, funky bracelets, gorgeous rings) in the world's most stylish city. Noted American actress Angeline Jolie and some of her kids were part of a past tour, during which you discover the favorite leisurewear of thrifty Parisian teenagers on a budget, and attend sample sales where the most fashionable brands sell last year's collections at discounts of up to 70 percent.

Sandra is qualified to work with teenagers and carries a cell phone at all times. Parents are more than welcome to join the fun of this shopping tour...and usually book the tour for themselves! Our tour began and ended at a centrally located Starbucks Paris café. You can book this online or do it by the telephone via a toll free number. You will then receive a voucher by email, print it out and make sure to reconfirm your booking a few days in advance. Often a smaller number of tour members ensures a more personalized experience.



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