Eat in Paris

Parisian Meals

Eat as a Parisian Eats

- Local Parisians are thin. Reasons is following
- Light breakfast
- Light, long lunch
- Small snack or drink in the late afternoon
- No snacking between meals
- Late dinner but not heavy
- Walk everywhere
- No Fast Food

How Parisians Never Eat

...never ever, EVER eat at McDonald's or Dominoes Pizza or Starbucks or KFC or Subway; there are always much, much better places to eat. Plan ahead and read reviews. Experience the best of France. Carefully planned, restaurants can be very reasonably priced. Certainly you can splurge and spend a fortune for an exceptional meal at a top 3 star Michelin restaurants...but also see how the average guy can dine at a Michelin restaurant without breaking the bank.

Where to Find Great Places to Eat in Paris

* Paris Restaurants

Breakfast

French eat breakfast that is usually light such as coffee with milk, toasted bread & jam or simple pastry such as a butter croissant.

The Truth about Hotel Breakfast

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- **Most Hotel Breakfasts are Mediocre**: Many hotels prioritize cost-cutting measures, using

industrialized liquid eggs, canned OJ, and low-quality coffee, resulting in a standard, uninspiring breakfast spread.
- **Limited Options**: Hotels often stick to a predictable menu, with eggs, bacon, toast, hash browns, and sad grilled mushrooms being common staples. This lack of variety can lead to boredom and disappointment.
- **Quality varies greatly**: While some luxury hotels and Asian hotels excel at offering high-quality breakfast options, including fresh eggs, homemade bread, and local specialties, others fall short.
- **Breakfast Buffets can be Unhygienic**: With high-transfer *touchpoints* like tongs, juice jugs, and silverware, hotel breakfast buffets can be breeding grounds for germs and bacteria.
- **COVID-19 has changed the game**: The pandemic has led many hotels to rethink their breakfast buffet offerings, with some opting for grab-and-go options or à la carte service to prioritize guest safety.

Hotel Breakfast Alternatives

Instead of eating breakfast at a hotel, pass by the dining room and take a couple pieces of fruit to put into your pocket to eat during your Parisian adventure `you have already paid for it` and perhaps grab a quick cup of coffee.

- **Parisian Café**: Try a local French café like the French for a croissant and “café crème” [Don't worry dieters, it's actually coffee and *milk*]. Don't order orange juice as it can be pre-made days in advance waiting for an eager tourist.

- **Patisseries and Boulongeries**: are good stops for breakfast if you are pressed for time or if you are staying at an Airbnb. All serve pastries for take-out. Some will serve beverages like coffee and tea at a small table or bar. Cold canned or bottled drinks are often available. Did you know that at the best boulangeries croissants take three days to prepare? Great purchase at a little more than one euro each. Always ask for a *croissant beure* because sometimes crossants can be made without butter and are usually inferior.

- **Salon de Thé** or Tea House: serves more than tea and pastries. Most serve much of the day, well into the afternoon. Pastries and perhaps tea or French Chocolat Chaud is terrific for breakfast but also perfect for a late afternoon stop to recuperate from a heavy schedule, to relax and discuss the joy of Paris and think about where to go for dinner.

- **American Breakfast** Sure there are several popular breakfast diners that serve American-style breakfasts, if you must. Please avoid Starbucks as there are much better options. Try 46_3rd or Holy Belly or Happy Days Diner Châtelet or Breakfast in America - Quartier Latin

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Breakfast Habits in Paris

- **Timing**:
  - Breakfast in Paris is typically a light and quick affair, usually eaten between 7:00 AM and 9:00 AM.

- **Common Foods**:
  - **Bread**: Slices of baguette or toast with butter and jam (confiture) are also very common.

The bread is often dipped into coffee or hot chocolate.
    - **Pastries**: The quintessential Parisian breakfast often includes pastries such as croissants. More refined pastries are usually reserved for the weekend, especially Sunday. Pastries are bought fresh from a local boulangerie.
    - **Dairy**: Yogurt and cheese might be included, although they are less common than pastries and bread.
- **Drinks**:
    - **Coffee**: The most popular breakfast drink is coffee, typically served as *café au lait* (coffee with milk), espresso, or *café noir* (black coffee).
    - **Tea**: Tea is also a common choice, usually served with milk or lemon.
    - **Hot Chocolate**: Known as chocolat chaud, this rich drink is especially popular among children.
    - **Juice**: Freshly squeezed orange juice or other fruit juices are sometimes enjoyed. Local servers can often spot visitors because the French do not often order orange juice, coffee and a crossant at a café.

- **At Home vs. Café**:
    - **At Home**: Many Parisians have a simple breakfast at home. It is quick and often eaten standing up or on the go.
    - **Café**: For those who prefer a more leisurely start to the day, enjoying breakfast at a café is a popular option. Sitting at a café terrace, sipping coffee, and eating a pastry while watching the city wake up is a cherished Parisian experience.

- **Work Culture**:
    - Breakfast is generally not a social or business meal in Paris. It is seen as a personal time to start the day quietly.
    - Many Parisians will have their breakfast quickly before heading out to work or school.

- **Portions and Pace**:
    - Portions are typically small and the meal is light, as lunch is usually the main meal of the day.
    - The pace is usually quick, especially on weekdays. On weekends, breakfast might be more leisurely, especially if enjoyed at a café.

- **Dietary Preferences**:
    - While traditional breakfast foods are most common, there is a growing trend towards healthier options, including whole grain breads, fresh fruit, and granola.

Understanding these breakfast habits provides insight into the Parisian approach to the first meal of the day, which balances simplicity and quality, often enjoyed with a good cup of coffee.

Lunch

Lunch Habits in Paris

- **Timing**:
    - Lunch in Paris typically takes place between 12:00 PM and 2:00 PM. Many Parisians take a full hour or more for their lunch break, especially on weekdays.

- **Meal Structure**:
  - A typical Parisian lunch often consists of multiple courses. It usually starts with an entrée (starter), followed by the plat principal (main course), and concludes with a dessert or cheese.
  - Common starters include salads, soups, or charcuterie.
  - Main courses vary widely, featuring dishes like steak frites, roast chicken, or fish with vegetables.
  - Desserts may include pastries, fruit tarts, or a simple yogurt.
- **Drinks**:
  - Water (still or sparkling) is commonly served, and wine is a popular accompaniment, even for lunch. Some might opt for a light beer or soft drinks.
  - Coffee, typically an espresso, is often enjoyed after the meal.
- **Venues**:
  - Parisians have various options for lunch, ranging from Bistros, Brasseries, and Cafés to Restaurants and Boulangeries. Many also opt for takeaway from a Traiteur or grab a quick bite from a Pâtisserie.
  - Business lunches are often held in more formal restaurants, while casual lunches with friends or family might take place in bistros or cafés.
- **Work Culture**:
  - In professional settings, lunch is often a time for socializing and networking rather than quick eating. It's common for colleagues to dine together, and important business discussions might take place over a meal.
  - Many businesses in Paris close for lunch, allowing employees a leisurely break.
- **Portions and Pace**:
  - Lunch portions are typically moderate, with an emphasis on savoring the meal rather than eating quickly. The pace is relaxed, and it's not uncommon for lunches to last over an hour.
- **School Lunches**:
  - French schoolchildren usually have a substantial lunch, either provided by the school canteen or brought from home. School lunches are often well-balanced and include a variety of courses.
- **Takeaway and Picnics**:
  - On weekends or sunny days, Parisians might opt for a picnic in one of the city's many parks. Baguettes, cheese, charcuterie, and fruit are common picnic items.
  - Takeaway options are also popular for those in a hurry, with many choosing to pick up sandwiches or salads from boulangeries or traiteurs.
- **Dietary Preferences**:
  - While traditional French cuisine dominates, there is a growing trend towards healthier and more diverse options, including vegetarian, vegan, and international cuisines.

Understanding these lunch habits can help you appreciate the cultural significance of the midday meal in Paris and how it reflects the broader French approach to dining and socializing.

Dinner

Typical Parisian Dinner

Timing

- Dinner in Paris usually starts later in the evening, typically between 7:30 PM and 9:00 PM. It is often a leisurely affair that can last several hours.

Aperitif (Apéro)

- The evening often begins with an aperitif, known as “apéro”. This is a time for relaxing and socializing *before* the meal.
- Common aperitifs include light alcoholic drinks like wine, Champagne, Kir (white wine with crème de cassis), pastis, or vermouth.
- Accompaniments may include small snacks such as olives, nuts, charcuterie, cheese, or savory pastries.

Meal Structure

- A typical Parisian dinner consists of multiple courses:
  - **Entrée (Starter)**: This might be a light dish such as a salad, soup, terrine, or pâté.
  - **Plat Principal (Main Course)**: The main course often features meat, fish, or poultry, accompanied by vegetables, rice, or potatoes. Classic dishes include boeuf bourguignon, duck confit, and coq au vin.
  - **Fromage (Cheese Course)**: A selection of cheeses is typically offered before dessert. Common choices include brie, camembert, roquefort, and chèvre.
  - **Dessert**: Desserts can range from pastries like éclairs and tartes to more refined options like crème brûlée, mousse au chocolat, or île flottante.
  - **Digestif**: After dessert, a digestif such as brandy, cognac, or an herbal liqueur like Chartreuse or Armagnac may be served.

Drinks

- Wine is the preferred beverage during dinner, with different wines paired with different courses. Red wine is common with meat dishes, while white wine or rosé may be served with lighter fare or fish.
- Water is also provided, and sparkling water is a popular choice.
- Coffee, usually an espresso, is served after the meal, often alongside or after the dessert.

Venues

- Dinners can be enjoyed in various settings, including home gatherings, restaurants, bistros, and brasseries. Each venue offers a distinct atmosphere, from the intimate and cozy to the bustling

and lively.
- For special occasions, fine dining restaurants offer elaborate multi-course meals with sophisticated presentations and gourmet ingredients.

Work Culture

- Unlike lunch, dinner is generally not a business affair. It is more of a personal and social event, often spent with family or friends.

Portions and Pace

- Dinner portions are typically generous but not excessive, focusing on quality and presentation.
- The pace of dinner is unhurried, with each course savored and enjoyed over conversation. It's common for dinners to last two to three hours.

Dietary Preferences

- While traditional French cuisine dominates, Parisian dinners are increasingly incorporating diverse influences, including vegetarian, vegan, and international dishes.

Home Dining

- When dining at home, Parisians may follow a simpler version of the multi-course meal but still place emphasis on fresh, high-quality ingredients and the enjoyment of food and company.

Understanding these dinner habits can help you appreciate the cultural significance of the evening meal in Paris and how it reflects the broader French approach to dining and socializing.

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