

By Sally Peabody, Your Great Days in Paris

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Affordable Accommodations In Paris? Yes, Possible and Plentiful!

Savvy travelers searching for good-value places-to-stay in Paris need not be deterred by the Euro's recent strength. The challenge: to find affordable Paris accommodations that you would actually be glad to stay in! Is such a thing still possible? The answer is a resounding YES! With an arbitrary limit of 100 Euros a night, I set out in March to search for clean, welcoming, even charming, accommodations that offer reasonable accessibility to the abundant attractions of the French capital.

The result: I discovered a range of more-than-acceptable choices for those on a weak-dollar budget, including small, family-run hotels, Bed and Breakfast establishments, and short-stay apartments.

To be sure, there are numerous hotels, as well as a number of reliable (albeit charmless) hotel chains, that aim expressly to serve the cost-conscious. But this is Paris, so a little charm and uniqueness is in order, along with some solid comfort and more than a modicum of amenities.

Four excellent "two-star" examples are the Hotel Muguet, the Hotel Porte Dorée, the Hotel Jeanne D'Arc and the Hotel Residence Monge.

The stylish Hotel Muguet in the Invalides quartier has 48 rooms. And while some do exceed my 100 E benchmark, singles are 87 E and doubles (one large bed) are 97 E per night. Plus the Muguet is air-conditioned. Upper-floor rooms have views of the Eiffel Tower or of the gilded dome of Invalides. And the hotel is within easy walking distance of the metro, cafes, bistros, the superb rue Cler 'market street', the Champ de Mars and the Eiffel Tower itself. The Muguet offers calm and comfort in a quiet (and otherwise expensive) neighborhood.

In another part of Paris, consider a hotel where every room, even the 'triples', costs under 100 E! The carefully renovated Hotel Porte Doree offers quintessential 'family-run' lodgings. The personable young owners, Christina and Laurents Graveldinger, are a Californian-Parisian couple, and their hotel is clearly a labor of love. The thirty-nine well-decorated chambres range from 51 to 83 E per night. The location in the 12th arrondissement is admittedly not center Paris--- but this hotel is one block from the verdant Parc de Vincennes, a big benefit for families with children. And thanks to the efficient Paris metro, guests are a mere 15 minutes from the Louvre. And Christina and Laurents are always ready to advise guests on sightseeing options, restaurants and activities.

For the many Paris visitors who love the Marais, the Hotel Jeanne D'Arc is an excellent choice. Located at 3 rue de Jarente on a quiet and very central street, the hotel offers pleasant public lounges and various options in bedrooms, ranging from 'Petite Chambres' for two at 57E per night to standard doubles for 80E. The hotel also offers triple rooms. The abundant attractions of the Marais and surrounding quarters are an easy walk or metro ride from the Jeanne D'arc.

A fourth option, the Hotel Residence Monge in the bustling Latin Quarter, offers simple, comfortable accommodation. Rooms in the rear of the hotel overlook the Arennes du Lutece, the well-preserved remains of Paris' only Roman amphitheatre. The location is near the lively rue Mouffetard 'Market Street', the Pantheon and the Botanical Gardens. The museums and monuments of central Paris are either a do-able walk or a short metro ride away. Both singles and doubles are priced at under 100 E per night.

If staying in a hotel is not your option of choice, you might consider a Parisian Bed and Breakfast. By staying in a private home, guests gain an insider's perspective on French culture, and the city itself. B&B breakfasts are continental--- coffee, juice, croissants, bread and jam. The levels of comfort and the sizes of rooms vary. Bathrooms may be shared or they may be private.

Good Morning Paris and Paris B&B Service are two agencies with solid track-records of matching travelers with rooms (and hosts) that meet their requirements. Good Morning Paris' B&B offerings range from 35-40 E for a single room, 42-58 E for a double, 55-70 E for a triple per night. Paris B&B Service offers a range of slightly more upscale choices, with many, but not all, of their lodgings exceeding 100 E per night. Both of these placement services list locations throughout Paris, including in the choicest quartiers. And each takes special care to match guests with 'hosts' that provide a good linguistic fit.

Finally, for travelers who will be staying in Paris for a week or more, renting a short-term apartment is a stellar option. Of course, there are many short-term rentals that are far in excess of 700 E a week. However, there remains an abundant choice for one-bedroom or studio apartments that don't exceed our price-ceiling (and even two-bedrooms can average out to 100 E if they are shared by couples, or by a family which would require two hotel rooms).

I have become a confirmed short-stay renter in Paris. The freedom is exhilarating! You can eat breakfast or dinner whenever you choose, and sleep in if you wish. And just as importantly, you can buy and cook all that gorgeous food that people without kitchens can only admire vicariously when visiting the markets. You feel like a resident rather than a tourist.

When searching for short-stay apartments it is wise to keep some practical concerns in mind. Always clarify deposit, confirmation and payment policies. Find out how close the nearest metro station is. Determine if the neighborhood is quietly residential, or lively far into the night. And where are the nearest 'market streets', marche volants, or other necessary services?

In terms of the apartment itself, check to see if a contact person will be readily available. And don't neglect to clarify the sleeping and bathroom arrangements (double beds or twin singles are much more common than queen-sized beds and generally there is a shower or bathtub, but not both). Finally, clarify the kitchen amenities. If you envision gourmet feasts and have only a two-burner cooktop, the challenge can be disheartening.

For suitable apartments in and around hip Montmartre, contact Perfectly Paris Apartment Rentals. Managed by personable Toronto-native Gail Boisclair, this is a consortium of studio, one, and two bedroom apartments rented out on behalf of private owners when they are not in town. Perfectly Paris even offers an adorable little cottage in a quiet garden courtyard.

Another good option for apartments throughout Paris is Cooper Apartment Rentals. Or try Paris Vacation Apartments with listings in Montmartre and near the Louvre. All of these small-scale, owner-managed services have websites that graphically display the lodgings they list.

With so many good options and placement services available, stylish and well-located Paris accommodations need not bankrupt your budget! So bon voyage!

If you go: Note, when calling Paris from outside France dial the international codes 011 33 and then drop the 0 in the first '01' but do dial the '1'. When calling from inside France, dial the 01 as numbers are listed below.

Hotels:

1. The Hotel Muguet: Mme. Catherine Pelletier, owner/manager.

17 rue Chevert, 75007, Paris

Metro: La Tour Maubourg

Email: muguet@wanadoo.fr

Website: www.hotelmuguet.com

Phone: 01 47 05 05 93

Fax: 01 45 50 25 37

The Hotel Residence Monge: Owner/manager: Julie Chatillon
Address: 55 rue Monge 75005 Paris
Metro: Monge
Email: Hotel-Monge@wanadoo.fr
Website www.hotelmonge.com
Phone: 01 43 26 87 90 Fax: 01 43 54 47 25

The Hotel Porte Doree: Owners: Christina and Laurents Graveldinger
Address: 273 avenue Daumensnil, 75012, Paris.
Metro: Daumensil RER: Nation Car park nearby.
email: paris_hotels_paris.com
Website: www.hoteldelaportedoree.com
Phone: 01 43 07 56 97 Fax: 01 49 28 08 18

The Hotel Jeanne D'Arc:
3 rue de Jarente, 75004 Paris Metro: St. Paul
email: information@hoteljeannedarc.com
Website: www.hoteljeannedarc.com
Phone: 01 48 87 62 11 Fax: 01 48 87 37 31

B&B Services:

Bonjour Paris B&B Service: Owner: Christine Bokobza.
Address: 45 rue Lacedpede, Paris, 75005
Email: info@goodmorningparis.com
Website: www.goodmorningparis.com
Phone: (0)1 47 07 28 29. Fax: (0)147 07 44 45
Call or check website for booking details.

Paris B&B Services: 1-800-872-2632 (based in San Diego, California).
Website: www.parisbandb.com

Selected Apartment Rental Services:

Perfectly Paris: Contact: Gail Boisclair
Address: 14 rue Lapeyrere, Paris 75018
Email: gail@perfectlyparis.com
Website: www.perfectlyparis.com
Phone: 01 44 92 00 84

Paris Vacation Apartments: Owners: Isis Bouhraoua and Alex Mony.
Email: pva2rent@aol.com
Website: www.parisvacationapartments.com
Apartment photos on website as well as an availability calendar.

Cooper Apartment Rentals: Owner: Glenn Cooper
Address: Cooper Paris Flats, 274 rue St. Honore, 75001, Paris
Phone/fax: 1-516-977-3318
Email: cooperql@wanadoo.fr
Website: www.paris-aparts.com