

The Traveling Professor

Small Group Tours for Active Adults

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Favorite Dining Spots for Every Taste and Budget

French food is different (thank goodness) from what can be found in the United States. On scanning a menu, the diner may see traditional French dishes like escargot (snails), boudin noir (blood sausage), or choucroute garnie (sauerkraut, usually served with sausage, pig knuckle, and salted meats). More familiar dishes like steak, pasta, chicken and fish are served too. However, even those who have completed French IV in high school may find translating a French menu to be a daunting task. Don't use the "point and pray" method of ordering in a restaurant. The unfortunate consequence might be something like *la viande de cheval* or *tête de veau*. My friend Andy Herbach's book, *Eating and Drinking in Paris* has been a lifesaver for me. Not only are his restaurant picks always spot-on, his book has a "menu reader". In clear English, it clearly describes items like *filet de lieu noir sauce champignons*, *croque-monsieur*, and *cassoulet* – delicious and welcoming foods that you should order but probably wouldn't if you didn't know what they were.

Parisians typically enjoy dinner later in the evening than we do, but most restaurants are open for dinner at 6 or 7 p.m. Dress is a little bit more formal than in the U.S. but jeans are common. It is easy to spend \$1,000 for dinner at places like *l'Ambroise*, *Alain Ducasse at the Hôtel Plaza Athénée*, or *Le Grand Véfour*. Then again, there are plenty of good places for fewer than €100 or even €50 (with wine) for two. I think someone can even get away with spending under €20 for a decent meal by steering clear of high profile tourist areas.

At popular restaurants, reservations are a must. Make reservations through the hotel concierge, by phone, or just stop by the restaurant a few days in advance. It's often possible to request a reservation by e-mail, but be certain to get a confirmation. See the notes I have made regarding reservations on some of my selections.

By law, restaurants must display menus with prices outside the restaurant. In almost all cases, the price includes tax and tip. See the section on "Tipping" later on in this guide.

I need to say that half the fun of dining in Paris is discovering good restaurants by yourself, but here are my Top Picks listed by arrondissement:

Brasserie Bofinger. 5, rue de la Bastille, 4th arrondissement. Métro: Bastille.

Another grand turn-of-the-century Parisian favorite with a strong Alsatian bias. The seafood platters (fruits de mer) are the superstars here. Even though the crowd is mostly French, I found the staff to be quite friendly and accommodating. It is moderately priced. It's near the Bastille opera house, so it's difficult to get a table immediately before or after the opera. Bofinger's "Mini-Me" counterpart, *Le Petit Bofinger*, is across the street. Reserve a day or two in advance. Website: www.bofingerparis.com.

L'As du Fallafel. 34, rue des Rosiers, 4th arrondissement. Métro: St-Paul.

This Jewish deli-type restaurant in the Marais is a crowd-pleaser. I like it so much for their 6-8 euro falafels (they call them "cocktail de viandes", literally translated as "meat cocktail") washed down with an Orangina that I keep their business card tacked on my corkboard in my kitchen. A great little take-away ("emporter" in French) place or fine for a sit-down lunch (reservations not taken). I highly recommend this restaurant for a tasty, inexpensive meal.

Le Pré Verre. 8, rue Thenard, 5th arrondissement. Métro: Maubert-Mutualite.

I highly recommend this restaurant. The food and wine is of exceptional quality and the price is right. Creations are wide ranging and imaginative dishes like veal kidneys with tamarind, hanger steak with artichokes, and poached skate wing with cranberries. It is near the Cluny, across the street from the Hôtel du Collège de France. The French food here is complemented with spices, especially those of the

Asian/Mediterranean variety. They offer a prix fixe menu for about €30 that makes it the best dinner bargain in Paris. The lunch “formule” costs half of that. Make a reservation a day or two beforehand for the upstairs room. Website: www.lepreverre.com.

Le Coupe Chou. 9-11, rue de Lanneau, 5th arrondissement. Métro: Maubert-Mutualite. Americans seem to love this place located in the Latin Quarter, and for good reason. The fireplace and candlelit setting make it a favorite for romantics. The legendary Salade Coup Chou is topped with bacon, poached egg and croutons. Boeuf Bourguignon is richly served with meaty beef, carrots and onions. The sliced duck breast is my fave, perfectly balanced with sweet pears and light potato pancakes. Are you hungry yet? Reservations are not usually required. Website: www.lecoupechou.com.

Brasserie Lipp. 151, boulevard Saint Germain, 6th arrondissement. Métro: St Germain des-Prés. I had my first meal ever in Paris here. I like to go for the generous choucroute garnie (sauerkraut with various meats) but sometimes the smell of fresh local seafood dishes (the cod, in particular) can change my mind. The menu (except for the prices) has not changed in 75 years. Try Chartier for something on the same style, but less expensive. Reservations a day or two before dining are recommended. Ask to be seated on the main floor. Dinner for two is about 125-150 euros or so. Website: www.ila-chateau.com/lipp.

Bistrot d'Henri. 16, rue Princesse, 6th arrondissement. Métro: St Germain des-Prés or Saint-Sulpice. Brothers David and Julien run this friendly spot with about 25 seats. The menu has a strong Breton (Atlantic coast) influence. That means dishes like duck breast with honey, lamb with prunes, and natural-tasting seafood crepes. I never say “no” to anything with cheese, especially the potatoes. It should be about 30-35 euros per person. Website: www.lebistrotthenri.1001menus.com.

Pâtisserie Viennoise. 8, rue de l'École de Médecine, 6th arrondissement. Métro: Odéon. What a classic pastry shop! I go out of my way to have breakfast here with the Sorbonne students. It's not bad for lunch either. Most everything is made on the premises – from flaky croissants to cinnamon dusted apple tarts to yodel-inducing strudels. Angelina may have the reputation of having the best hot chocolate in town, but Pâtisserie Viennoise beats it by a kilometer. The creamy chocolate cup is topped with a dollop of whipped cream stiffer than the desk clerk at The Ritz. Closed weekends.

Les Bouquinistes. 53, Quai des Grands Augustins, 6th arrondissement. Métro: St-Michel. This left-bank Guy Savoy restaurant is in the shadow of the Notre Dame Cathedral. It is good, trendy, and hip. It was a perfect choice for a Valentine's Day dinner I enjoyed here. About €200 for two. Website: www.lesbouquinistes.com.

A La Petite Chaise. 36 rue de Grenelle, 7th arrondissement. Métro: Rue du Bac. Pay no attention to the claim of Le Procope as being the oldest restaurant in Paris – A La Petite Chaise rules. The dour-faced wait staff is all business while serving up fresh French classics like foie gras, real onion soup capped with sharp gruyère cheese. Seafood plates are super-fresh but the pasta and meat dishes deserve merit too. You know it's authentically French when upon noticing wealthy older French gentlemen accompanied by their considerably younger “nieces”. The prix fixe menu is a good value. Website: www.alapetitechaise.fr.

Café Constant. 139, rue St. Dominique, 7th arrondissement. Métro: École Militaire. A casual and relatively inexpensive spot near the ET. Legendary Chef Christian Constant makes French food easy. Where else are you going to get dishes like *tartare of oysters, seabass and salmon seasoned with ginger and lemon* created by a Michelin-starred chef? Or how about *veal cutlet from the Basque country with white Tarbais beans*? I always have room for the dreamy *Île Flotante* for dessert. One of my top picks. About €100 for two. Website: www.cafeconstant.com.

Les Cocottes. 135, rue St. Dominique, 7th arrondissement. Métro: École Militaire. Another Christian Constant gem. Set up almost like an American diner with a French slant, it is casual and not expensive. The unique main dishes are served *en cocotte*, or casserole style. You are likely to

see Chef Constant there, and most likely, he would love to chat with you. Website: www.maisonconstant.com/les-cocottes.

1728. 8 rue d'Anjou, 8th arrondissement. Métro: Concorde or Madeleine.

Satin drapes, chandeliers, candlelit tables, surrounded by 18th century fine works of art make this softly lit and subdued restaurant one of the most romantic spots in town. The menu lists intriguing selections of Japanese/French fusion dishes. It is reasonable (i.e., the €110 tasting menu) for a restaurant of its class and elegance. I wear a jacket and tie when dining here. Website: www.restaurant-1728.com.

Chartier. 7, rue Faubourg Montmartre, 9th arrondissement. Métro: Grands Boulevards.

Step back over 100 years in time to legendary Bouillon Chartier. It's great fun in a grand old dining hall. Diners may find themselves sharing a water bottle or bread basket with someone from Paris, Finland, Korea, or Argentina. No one will admit this is the best food they've eaten but an appetizer (called an entrée in Paris), a plat (what we call an entrée in the U.S.), dessert, wine (or water) goes for about €20. No reservations, just line up outside and chat up the friendly crowd while waiting to be seated. Diners are not admitted after 10 p.m. Website: www.restaurant-chartier.com

Chez Michel. 10, rue de Belzunce, 10th arrondissement. Métro: Gare du Nord or Poissonnière.

Expect to find few tourists at this plain small bistro serving a variety of authentic dishes of the French seacoast like mussels, kig ha farz (Normandy stew of various meats), roast suckling pig, wild pigeon, boar, and beef cheeks. Well, if you wanted to eat at Applebee's, you should have stayed home. Chez Michel is not all that easy to find, but your taste buds will be rewarded for the effort. Try your best to keep the bill under €100 for two. I would reserve a day or two in advance, although I walked in with no problem. Ask to be seated on the main floor for a more intimate experience, downstairs for a communal environment. No air conditioning. Chez Michel is one of my top choices. Website: www.restaurant-chez-michel.com.

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