

See the World: Paris

Friday, January 10, 2014 13:15

Ah, Paris. Not simply a city, but an entire culture of wine and romance. The sidewalks are older (i.e. plenty of cobblestones, cracks and curbs without ramps), but the city is modernizing and around the more popular tourist areas the accessibility is greatly sufficient. [This](#) has been a good guide.

DO NOT USE THE METRO. There are only a few metro stations that have a lift down to the trains and the few that have lifts are notoriously out of order. We used the [buses](#) and were able to get discounted tickets. The bus route and ticket prices can be acquiring by the Disability Help Desk found in the major train stations.

Paris is also an expensive city, but many of the tourist attractions are free or reduced for disabilities!

Itinerary

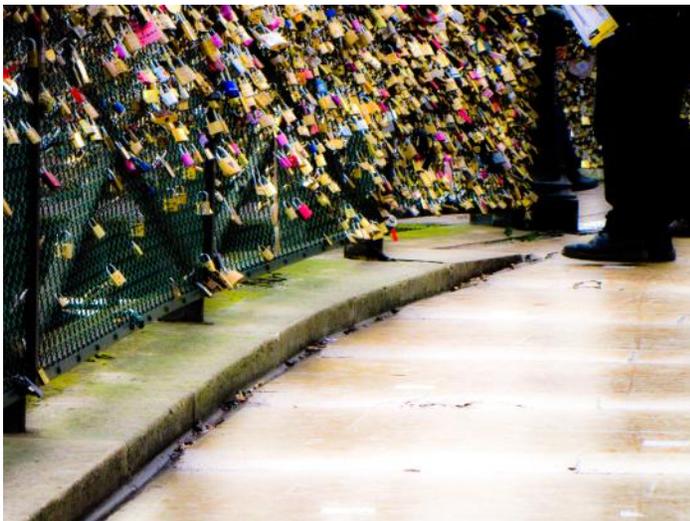
01DAY

Morning: **LOVE BRIDGE** (Pont de Arts): bring a lock!

- [Pont de Arts](#) or the "Love Bridge" epitomizes a European tradition of attaching a lock to a bridge to symbolize the strength of love in a relationship. The couple will go to a bridge, attach a lock with their inscription and then throw the key to the river, symbolizing that their lock (like their love) can never become unlocked again. Couples have been performing this rite since 2008 all over Europe, but Parisians can claim this tradition as originating on their bridges.

Afternoon: **SACRE COEUR go at night** (Steep hill! Take tram to the top)

- There's beautiful, hilly part of the city near [Sacre Coeur](#) that is best to go at night in order to see the view of all of Paris lit up against the night sky. It was a clear night for us and we were able to clearly see the **Eiffel Tower** glitter (the lights on the Eiffel Tower flicker all night for an amazing light show)
- These notes come from a Parisian friend of ours, who gave us tips on how to see the best of Paris and he was absolutely spot on
 - "Start the evening walking along [Place du Tetre](#) for the piano bars, meander away from the top of the Sacre Coeur hill. Remember, this is Paris so stop and watch the street performers and have wine at one of the **piano bars**. Don't let me find out that you didn't tip a single street performer. Next, as it starts to get dark, go to Montemarme by going left from tram stop. Once it's good and dark, take the tram to the steps of Sacre Coeur and breathe in the view of this beautiful city." And breathe it in we did.
- DINNER OPTION: L'Ete en Pente Douce/ (PG 456) 23 Rue Muller



Pont de Arts "Love Bridge"



Sacre Coeur at night

02DAY

Morning: **CANAL St. MARTIN Republique**

- Paris is said to be a walking city, which can be more challenging for people in chairs with cobblestones and sidewalks without ramps. My wheelchair attachment, FreeWheel, became extremely useful and I was able to navigate the unpaved, cobblestone streets without much difficulty. The [Canal St. Martin](#) is an example of one of the highlights of Paris that is not a single attraction, but a whole area of the city to be explored.

Afternoon: **EIFFEL TOWER** *take the bus and be there by 1300 to get in line!*

- One of the highlights of Europe, let alone Paris, has awesomely been adapted to be accessible. There are three platforms in the interior of the Eiffel Tower with a lift that goes up to the second platform. The third platform is the very tip top of the Tower and can only be reached by stairs. However, the second platform (the highest a person in a chair can go) is high enough to be able to see the entire city.
- The line to get tickets to get to the elevator is a gamble for those without a disability. [Many choose to buy their tickets ahead of time](#). However, persons with a visible disability are directed to skip the line and escorted then escorted straight to the lift. The tickets are not free, but can be reduced.
- ****NOTE:** There is a front and back to viewing the Eiffel Tower- the front side is on higher ground, in front of buildings and overlooking the fountains. The back side is on the field where the tower itself stands.

- **AFTER THE TOWER:** walk across the [Pont de Bir-Hakeim](#) bridge (The same bridge used in movie Inception with Leonardo DiCaprio)



Eiffel Tower

03DAY

Morning: **NOTRE DAME** (Service at 1100, be there at 0900)

- [Notre Dame](#) is a sight to be revered. The beauty of the cathedral only compliments the incredible history of the church and the impact the Catholic faith has in Europe today. We went to Sunday mass (there is a mass held every day) and we were escorted out of the line to the front pew. We were not asked to pay, but we made donations. The ushers keep the surrounding, circulating crowd quiet while those in the pews participate in the mass. It was a beautiful, incredibly moving experience. Unfortunately, I did not see the Quasimodo, the Hunchback and hero to disabilities everywhere.
- After mass, we walk to **Shakespeare and Company bookstore** on Rue de l'Odeon. This historic bookstore was the first English bookstore in Paris and is today one of the most unique and famous bookstores in Paris.

Afternoon: **Explore Marais**

- Go to [Luxembourg Gardens](#) (paths are accessible)
- (DINNER OPTION: Restaurant Polidor opens at 7 on 41 Rue Monsieur-le-Prince PG 454)

Evening: **MOULIN ROUGE**

- Show starts at 2100 or 2330, be there at least an hour early
- [BUY TICKETS IN ADVANCE](#) (no admission without tickets)
- Dress Code: No sweatpants, sandals, t-shirts, shorts, ball caps, sweatshirts, etc. This is a historic show, dress up!
- When buying tickets, there are options to have dinner with the show (in that case, you show up earlier as directed) or simply have the show with champagne, which is what we chose.
- ****NOTE:** The Moulin Rouge is NOT accessible. There are steps to get to the bathroom from the seating area and there was no available temporary ramp. It's best to call ahead and warn them you're coming. **BUT** the only accessible entrance into the theatre itself is THROUGH BACKSTAGE, which we were escorted through. So being in a wheelchair gives you a INSIDER GLIMPSE at the dancers before and after the show, which is priceless.
- ****BE WARNED:** This is not the nicest of districts in Paris. As you travel to the Moulin Rouge, there are quite a few novelty sex shops and French strip clubs. It's not a dangerous district, however; everyone's just walking around with shy sinner grins.



Notre Dame cathedral



Shakespeare and Company

04DAY

Morning: **OPERA GARNIER**

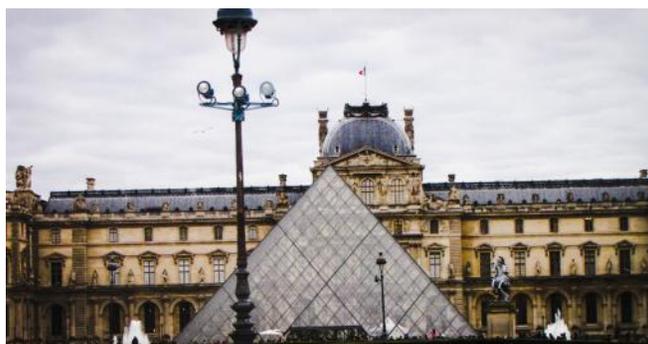
- o The [Opera Garnier](#) is the origin of ballet sophistication and upper class culture. Ballet students lived and breathed ballet, earning pennies to take home to their families and battling for the chance to continue in their classes. The most beautiful, graceful, talented and appealing dancers would be approached by "donors", wealthy men who'd pay for the student's room, board, clothing, etc. A dancer with a donor could afford to sleep after late night lessons, could buy quality clothing and equipment and most importantly, could afford to eat well. And this is where they danced; the grandeur of the interior reminded me of Cinderella's palace, where she met Prince Charming.

Afternoon: **LOUVRE**

- o Unfortunately, we ran out of time and didn't spend time inside the Louvre but we did take the (necessary) picture in front of the big, glass triangle in front. The entrance to the museum through the gardens is beautiful and to fully enjoy the Louvre, you need a whole day. I was fortunate enough to do this when I was younger, before my accident, and even a whole day was not enough time. There are incredible guides to the Louvre and information about how to navigate the museum, but the entrance and the interior are completely accessible. The lift ride from the entrance into the foyer is almost an amusement ride!



Opera Garnier



Entrance to the Louvre

WHERE WE STAYED:

St Christopher's Paris Gare du Nord Hostel

St Christopher's Inn Gare du Nord, 5, Rue de Dunkerque, Paris, France

Tel: 0044 2086007505 email: bookings@bedsandbars.com

**This hostel is clean, modern and accessible with a lift to the rooms. Bathrooms in the rooms are small and a few have a small step, so I

wasn't able to enter the bathroom with my wheelchair but I was able to transfer straight from my chair to the toilet seat. There's an attached restaurant/ bar that is split level, but there's an attached small lift to get from the bar to the pool tables and lounge in the back. Breakfast is served in this area and while simple, the breakfast spread is substantial. Warning: Every weekend night there's a live show in the bar area. This is very fun (and free!) but can also make sleeping challenging. **