

PARIS

ENCOUNTER

CATHERINE LE NEVEZ

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> 1 EIFFEL TOWER

SEE THE CITY OF LIGHT AT NIGHT FROM THE EIFFEL TOWER

The second-most mesmerising view of the 'city of light' by night is from the tip of the city's iconic spire, with its 360-degree panoramas over Paris. (The most mesmerising night-time view is, of course, from an aeroplane – preferably one that's landing.)

Over 250 million people have ascended the tower to date – around seven million each year. Most visit its three platforms (57m, 115m and 276m) in daytime hours, when, on a clear day, views from the top extend up to 60km. Far fewer visitors make the pilgrimage after sunset. Although you're unlikely to have it to yourself, come nightfall the queues are significantly shorter, and the illuminated boulevards and floodlit monuments spread out before you.

Gustave Eiffel constructed the tower initially as a temporary exhibit for the Exposition Universelle (World Fair) in 1889. Until the completion of Manhattan's Chrysler Building in 1930, it remained the world's tallest structure, at 320m (varying by up to 15cm when its 7000 tonnes of iron and 2.5 million rivets expand in warm weather and contract when it's cold). Its popularity assured its survival beyond the fair and its elegant architectural design became a defining fixture of the city's skyline.

Each night, the tower's twin searchlight beacons beam an 80km radius around the city (look up from the top platform to see the 6000-watt lamps). And every hour, for 10 minutes on the hour, the entire tower sparkles with 20,000 gold-toned lights. It took 25 mountain climbers five months to install the bulbs, and the glittering, diamondlike effect when viewed from within the tower is dazzling.

Night-time at the top can be breezy – bring a jacket.

LA VILLE LUMIÈRE

Paris was dubbed *la Ville Lumière* (the City of Light) in the 19th century, when it was the first Continental European city to install gas lamps along its streets – although some believe the nickname derives from the soft light captured by the impressionists' paintings. Either way, it remains a fitting description of the shimmering French capital.



To prolong the panoramas, book dinner at one of the tower's restaurants: Altitude 95, on the 1st level; or Le Jules Verne, the sublime 2nd-level restaurant, accessed by private lift (see p45).

Day or night, queues are set to be slashed with the 2009 introduction of online ticketing for groups, which should speed things up significantly for individual visitors. And queuing in the wind and rain will be a thing of the past when the area between its four feet is refurbished, although renovations aren't due to wrap up until 2015. Topping off the overhaul, a 3rd-floor champagne bar is also in the works.

See also p39.

>INVALIDES & EIFFEL TOWER

Stretching west along the Seine's southern bank, the broad boulevards and imposing architecture of the Invalides and Eiffel Tower quarter are Paris at its most bombastic.

This is where you can get up close and personal with the city's symbolic tower, and promenade through the sprawling grounds of the Hôtel des Invalides, the 17th-century war veterans' residence which includes a military museum and Napoleon's tomb. It's where you'll find the private mansion housing the Musée Rodin and its tranquil rose gardens filled with Rodin's sculptures including *The Thinker*. And it's where you can eye the Musée d'Orsay's incredible impressionist art, and peer out over Paris through this art nouveau railway station's glass clockface.

But time hasn't entirely stood still in this *grande dame* of a quarter, as evidenced by the recent opening of Jean Nouvel's black-and-burgundy boxlike masterpiece containing the Musée du Quai Branly, which showcases indigenous art.

INVALIDES & EIFFEL TOWER



SEE

Ballon Eutelsat.....	1	A6
Champ de Mars.....	2	D3
Église du Dôme.....	3	F3
Eiffel Tower.....	4	C2
Hôtel des Invalides.....	5	F3
Musée de l'Armée.....	6	F2
Musée des Égouts de Paris.....	7	E1
Musée d'Orsay.....	8	H2
Musée du Quai Branly....	9	D1

Musée Rodin.....	10	F3
Tombeau de Napoléon 1er.....	(see 3)	



DO

École Le Cordon Bleu.....	11	D6
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EAT

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Le Jules Verne.....	13	C2
Les Deux Abeilles.....	14	D1
Les Ombres.....	(see 8)	

Poilaène.....	15	C3
Restaurant Musée d'Orsay.....	(see 7)	
Rue Cler.....	16	E2



DRINK

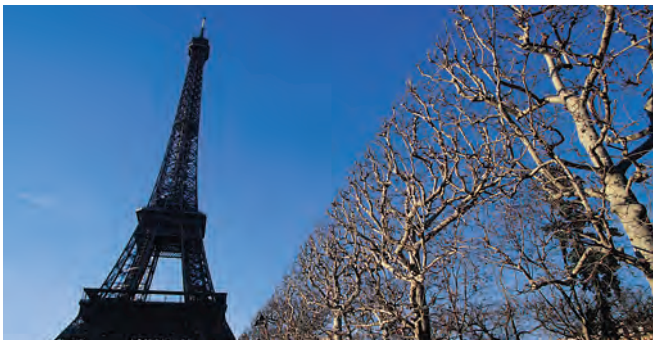
Café Branly.....	(see 8)	
Café des Hauteurs.....	(see 7)	



PLAY

La Pagode.....	17	F3
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Please see over for map



The Eiffel Tower rises above an avenue of trees



SEE

BALLON EUTELSAT

 01 44 26 20 00; www.aeroparis.com in French; Parc André Citroën, 2 rue de la Montagne de la Fage, 15e; admission Mon-Fri €10/9, Sat & Sun €12/10;  9am-9.30pm summer, to 5.30pm winter;  Balard or Lourmel

Drift up and up but not away – this helium-filled balloon remains tethered to the ground as it lifts you 150m for panoramas of Paris. Confirm ahead as the balloon doesn't ascend in windy conditions.

EIFFEL TOWER

 01 44 11 23 23; www.tour-eiffel.fr; Champ de Mars, 7e; lift 1st fl €4.80/2.50, 2nd fl €7.80/4.30, 3rd fl €12/6, stairs €4/3.10;  lifts 9am-12.45am mid-Jun-Aug (final ascension to top 11pm,

to other levels midnight), 9.30am-11.45pm Sep-mid-Jun (final ascension to top 10.30pm, to other levels 11pm), stairs 9am-12.30am mid-Jun-Aug (final admittance midnight), 9.30am-6.30pm Sep-mid-Jun (final admittance 6pm);  Champ de Mars-Tour Eiffel or Bir Hakeim; 

Lifts yo-yo up and down the north, west and east pillars of Paris' signature tower (p10); change lifts on the 2nd floor for the final ascent to the top. (Anyone nervous will be relieved to know that the lifts are monitored by computer, and in the event of overloading they're automatically immobilised and unable to leave.) If you're feeling athletic, you can take the south pillar's stairs – some 1665 of them – as far as the 2nd floor. There's wheelchair access to the 1st and 2nd floors.

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