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4 Charming Inexpensive Small Hotels in Paris

article and images by [Carole Terwilliger Meyers](#)

Paris is one of the most expensive cities in the world to visit. To wit, many years ago I had a fabulously memorable lunch in the charming, colorful outdoor courtyard of the elegant Plaza Athenee hotel. The charge for just my simple appetizer of half a cantaloupe was \$15. You can imagine what the rest of that meal cost, and what it would cost today. Yes, I remember it well. However, on my most recent visit to the City of Lights I enjoyed a delightful, filling fondue dinner, complete with salad and dessert, for just \$20 per person, proving it is possible to enjoy this magnificent city on a shoestring. Let me lead you to a few of the best charming, inexpensive small hotels in Paris.

Because your hotel is your biggest expense, it makes sense to cut costs there, if you must, leaving more dollars to spend on the scrumptious Parisian food and in the chic boutiques. So before my most recent visit I cornered my friends and scoured the guidebooks and internet in search of bargain beds in a few well-located, well-priced hotels.

Because my husband and I were traveling with our daughter, my biggest problem was finding a hotel that accommodates three people in one room, as unlike in the U.S., most European hotels don't put two double beds in one room. Another problem

was finding hotels that are responsive by e-mail. With the language barrier—I don't speak French—and time barrier—I live on the West Coast—I didn't want to phone. Today, most hotels want you to book through their online system. Good luck even finding a phone or fax number or e-mail.

Here, then, are the gems I unearthed in my dig.

Hotel Saint Andre des Arts

[Hotel Saint Andre des Arts](#) 66, rue Saint-Andre-des-Arts, 75006 Paris. 31 rooms with bath or shower; no elevator. Continental breakfast included.



exterior of Hotel Saint Andre des Arts in Paris, France

With lace-covered windows and a neat, attractively painted sign and doorway, street appeal is strong at this well-positioned Left Bank hotel located in the popular Latin Quarter. However, when we arrived, a fire brigade was busy dealing with a leaking pipe in the restaurant next door. As the narrow street was blocked, our cab dropped us off a few

doors down from the hotel's entrance. This meant we had to traipse through the wet, crowded street, dragging our suitcases through puddles. But what an exciting arrival it was!

Once inside the hotel, my husband was in for another surprise. Our room was on the 5th floor (in Europe that means the 6th), and guess who got to carry the heaviest bags up the ancient, uneven steps? Somehow, whether misinformed or befuddled by too much research, I was under the mistaken impression the hotel had an elevator. Oh, well. *C'est la vie!* The upside was we all got plenty of exercise coming and going, helping to offset that fabulous French food.

Our top-floor room slept three and featured a slanted ceiling with exposed rustic beams, and the bathroom was equipped with a full bathtub. (I became desperate when I discovered that the drain plug was missing, but cleverly cut off a corner of a towel with my trusty Swiss army knife, stuffing it satisfyingly into the formerly unquenchable hole.) Though we were a bit cramped in the small room, in general we were comfortable, and the room was blissfully quiet at night.

In the morning, we had breakfast with the other guests, seated either on a row of antique choir stalls in the entryway, or in the lobby at a convertible table set over a 200-year-old *trompe-l'oeil* floor. Our tablemates hailed from Australia, Canada, Italy, and, like us, from the good old U. S. of A. Our days got off to a pleasant start breaking bread and sipping *coffee au lait* with our fellow travelers. We exchanged tips on good restaurants and sightseeing and felt a little less anonymous in this very big city.

Outside, you couldn't find a better location. The charming street the hotel is situated on is lined with restaurants and boutiques, and all the many tiny intersecting streets lead to more, more, more.

Hotel des Grandes Ecoles

[Hotel des Grandes Ecoles](#) 75, rue du Cardinal Lemoine, 75005 Paris. 51 rooms; elevator. Continental breakfast E9/person additional.



guest room in Hotel des Grandes Ecoles in Paris, France; image courtesy of venue

Also on the Left Bank, but farther south near the “big schools”—the literal translation of this hotel’s name, referring to the Sorbonne and other colleges concentrated in the area—this delightful hotel is set back from the street behind a tall brick fence. Comprised of two ivy-covered houses, it is reached through a quiet courtyard. Rooms are big and individually decorated, with particularly quiet ones fronting the garden. It is near the Pantheon and close to plenty of low-budget shops and restaurants catering to students.

Hotel Caron de Beaumarchais

[Hotel Caron de Beaumarchais](#) 12, Rue Vieille-du-Temple, 75004 Paris. 19 rooms; elevator. Breakfast served until noon; 54F (\$8) additional.



exterior of Caron De Beaumarchais Hotel
in Paris, France

With its brilliant-blue-painted facade, this fashionable 18th-century hotel is also superbly located, just three blocks from the Seine, but this time on the Right Bank in the trendy Marais area. Rooms have exposed beams, and some on floors 5 and 6 have walk-out balconies with picturesque views over the rooftops

Hotel Le Presbytere

[Hôtel Le Presbytère](#) 78, Rue de la Verrerie, 75004 Paris. 14 rooms; no elevator. Continental breakfast served in room, additional fee.



exterior of Hôtel Le Presbytère in Paris, France

Also in the Marais, this really charming hotel is just a block from the Pompidou Centre and a few blocks from Notre Dame. A former presbytery dating from the 17th century, it has a heavy, dark-wood, Gothic style. One celebrated room features flying buttresses covering the bed in lieu of a canopy. Several bargain-basement-priced rooms are available that barely accommodate two people; though a shower is in each of these rooms, a shared toilet is down the hall. (This hotel was formerly Hotel Saint-Merry.)

important items to ask about when making a reservation

1. How many floors does the hotel have? Does it have an elevator? If possible, get a commitment to the actual room number you are assigned to (this isn't always available).
2. If requesting a room for three or four people, determine whether the beds are stationary—meaning you'll probably get a bigger room; or whether a fold-away bed will be brought in—meaning you could be quite cramped.
3. Be clear about whether the room has a private bath. Since

Paris's famous Ritz was the first hotel in the world to put a bathroom in a guest room, this might be an expected amenity here, but you'd be surprised how long it can take for the ranks to catch up.

4. Is breakfast included? In Paris, this is usually just baguettes and coffee, but it is worth around \$5 to \$8 per person and it gives you a chance to start your day more leisurely and to meet some fellow travelers. Nowadays, breakfast is usually available but at an additional charge.

5. Is the front desk manned around the clock? This is a safety issue.

6. What is the cancellation policy?

7. Do they accept a credit card for deposit and payment? This is a big convenience, especially when making reservations.

8. Request an e-mailed confirmation, or ask for it to be mailed with a brochure.

Be aware that in France, stars are awarded based on features, such as elevators and in-room baths, not for service or cleanliness.

getting there

season April, is of course, *the* month to be in Paris, but all of spring, summer, and fall are delightful. Winter can sometimes be severe.

flights Most flights from the U.S. land at Roissy-Charles de Gaulle Airport. Transportation into central Paris is available by bus, train, taxi, and limousine.

getting around The Paris Metro is one of the oldest and best subway systems in Europe. It is the most reasonably priced way to travel longer distances, though a taxi can be reasonable for parties of three or four. (Note that taxis are not hailed in Paris. Passengers wait for them at special stops signified by a blue and white sign.) We walked everywhere—always the preferable mode of transport for really

seeing things, as long as your feet hold out.

inexpensive food

Some of our favorite foods were inexpensive, picked up on the run. We loved the baguette sandwiches available in most bakeries for around \$3. Crepes were particularly popular with my vegetarian daughter, especially the banana-Nutella version. We all loved selecting fresh fruit from the street markets and remember fondly the biggest, sweetest, deepest-red cherries that have ever passed our lips.



group lunching at bistro in Paris, France
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