

# Paris

There are many reasons why students choose to study in Paris, not least because of the city's wide range of historical and cultural attractions. BETHAN NORRIS reports.

Paris is a great combination of the best of France and a city with a truly international outlook,' says Emma

Butler at Eurocentres, voicing just two of the many reasons which make Paris a popular destination for international students year after year. Butler adds, 'Our students benefit from studying in the very centre of Paris and being [within] walking distance of world-renowned museums, cathedrals, art galleries and monuments, and having a choice of both French and international restaurants and bars.'

Like most capital cities, Paris contains some of the most enduring symbols of its country and international students are attracted by the large number of world-famous tourist sights that fill the city. Francois Pfeiffer from Accord Language School, says, 'Students decide to go to Paris because they want to go to the capital and visit all the famous museums and monuments [such as] the Eiffel Tower, Champs Elysées, Opéra [and the] Notre-Dame Cathedral.'

One of the city's most unusual features, which has become a popular tourist attraction, is the catacombs found beneath the city streets. These tunnels and chambers, which run for 165 kilometres, were originally quarries dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries and

were mined to provide the stone for the expanding city. More recently, the underground caverns were used to hold the

remains of six million human bodies during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in an effort to solve the problem of overcrowding in the city's cemeteries.

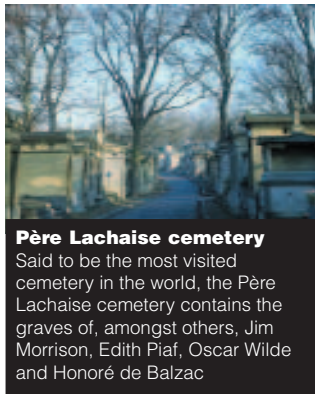
In order to ensure that international students make the most of what the city has to offer, many language schools in the capital have come up with interesting ways to bring

Paris to life. 'We offer guided visits to different areas of Paris,' says Claire Jannot at OISE. 'This week we are showing our students the film *Amélie* and then taking them on a guided tour of Montmartre where many of the scenes [from the film] were set.'

Montmartre was originally a separate village from Paris and offers visitors a glimpse of the old-fashioned, picturesque side of the city, with its cobbled streets and tiered gardens. The only hill in Paris, Montmartre also provides sweeping views over

the rest of the city and is home to the Sacré Coeur basilica which is situated on the city's highest point.

According to Susa Makinen from Institut Franco-Nordique, the Sacré Coeur - sacred heart - is one of the city's most famous sights. The basilica, which was built between 1875 and 1914 to mark the end of the Franco-



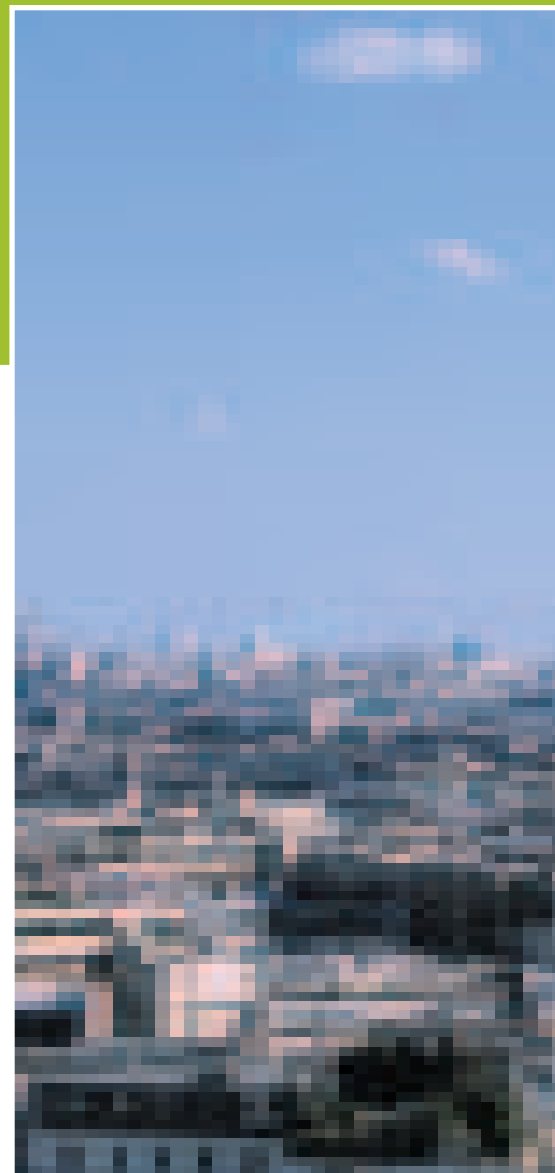
#### Père Lachaise cemetery

Said to be the most visited cemetery in the world, the Père Lachaise cemetery contains the graves of, amongst others, Jim Morrison, Edith Piaf, Oscar Wilde and Honoré de Balzac



#### The Champs Elysées

One of the central avenues in Paris, joining place de la Concorde with place Charles de Gaulle, the Champs Elysées is a focal point for New Year festivities and World Cup successes



Prussian war, contains one of the world's largest mosaics - depicting Christ with outstretched arms - and the top of the dome offers panoramic views of the surrounding area extending for 30 kilometres.

Another good way to see the sights of the city is by boat on the River Seine and Jannot reports that 'trips in the *bateaux mouches* [open air boats] are popular [with students], particularly in the summer'. The Île de la cité divides the Seine and it is possible to get fantastic views of the gothic Notre Dame cathedral from the river.

However, while the city offers many opportunities for visitors to find out about its rich and varied history, Makinen is also keen to point out some of the other facets of Paris' character. 'Paris has a reputation of being the centre of culture - also of youth culture - so students consider it a stimulating place to be and to do their studies,' she says. 'Paris is also a very modern city with a high tech centre in La Défense.'



## Agent viewpoint

'Students choose Paris because it is one of the most attractive cities in the world! They think it is a little bit expensive but with lots of things to do: museums, concerts, shopping, arts. All the places to visit and the attractions are easy to find. Maybe the only negative thing is that Paris is a very expensive city.'

**Sabrina Masotti, International Study Vacation, Italy**

'The city's reputation for art, culture, cuisine, history and romance [are reasons for students studying in Paris]. They like the tourist attractions, although they dislike the traffic congestion. Students spend most of their free time visiting tourist [sights] and trying the French cuisine. There is something for everyone in Paris.'

**Tasha Lewis, International Connections Consulting, USA**

'[Students] like the size and charm of Paris [but] they don't like the distances they need to travel and some find it too hectic. [Paris] is a world city with great possibilities to use the [French] language on the spot [and it is also] close to Switzerland. [In their free time students go] shopping, [participate in] weekend trips with their new friends, [go on] city tours and hang around in the nice places and squares in Paris.'

**Claudio Cesarano, Globo-study Sprachreisen, Switzerland**

*The Eiffel Tower rises above Paris' beautiful buildings (main picture)*

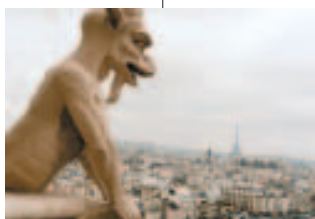


La Défense is the modern financial centre of Paris, complete with skyscrapers, modern architecture and the Grande Arche, a hollowed out cube standing 110 metres high and built in a direct line with the Arc de Triomphe. Pfeiffer agrees that this modern side to Paris can often come as a surprise to students. 'You always find students who dreamed of a typical old-fashioned Paris without so many cars [or] people on the streets, without [the] modern towers at La Défense,

and the challenge is to invite these students to understand the change and that other changes will happen in the next 10 or 20 years,' he says.

Paris is divided into a number of districts or *arrondissements* which have each retained their own particular identities,

and Butler from Eurocentres believes that this adds to the city's charm. 'The variety and special atmosphere of particular districts [are some



### Gargoyle, Notre Dame

Notre Dame cathedral is on the Île de la Cité in central Paris. Construction began in 1163 and the great cathedral has hosted many auspicious occasions such as the requiem mass of de Gaulle

of the more unknown qualities of the city,' she says. '[For example] the street markets, the street theatre, the local bars and also the ethnic communities with their wonderful cultures from the Middle East, the Far East and North Africa.'

The different parts of Paris also give students

plenty of choice when it comes to spending their free time in the evenings. 'In the evening, the students have meals and visit the Latin Quarter where they may take an aperitif,' says Jannot. The Latin Quarter, in the fifth and sixth districts, is so-called because up until the revolution in 1792 all communication between students and their professors took place here in Latin, and the area is still a popular student haunt, both with international students and those from the University of Paris Sorbonne. □