Paris Public Transportation : RATP

The Paris public transport network serves the entire city and all (almost all) its suburbs.

1- Transportation

A) The metro

The Métro is the cheapest, easiest and fastest way to get around Paris. There are 16 metro lines and some 300 metro stations; the entrance is indicated by a large yellow letter ‘M’.

Metros start running every day – including public holidays – at around 6am and stop at around 12.45am (from Sunday to Thursday) or at 1.45am (on Friday and Saturday).

The frequency at which metros run depends on the time and day: at peak hours, metros run every 2 minutes

B) The RER = Suburban Express Railway

The RER train network consists of 5 lines that serve Paris and the Paris region (Ile-de-France). Each line has a distinctive colour that is shown on RATP and SNCF signs and maps.

RER trains start running at approximately 6am and stop running at around 12.45am every day – including public holidays.

Within Paris, the RER operates in more or less the same way as the metro, except that you need to put your ticket through the automatic barriers a second time on the way out. If your RER station has a connection with the metro, you can use the same ticket for the whole journey.

C) The Transilien = Regional Train

Transiliens are regional trains departing from major Paris train stations (Nord, Est, Lyon, Austerlitz, Montparnasse, Saint-Lazare). Tickets and passes are on sale at ‘Ile-de-France’ ticket desks and automatic ticket machines in train stations and in metro/RER stations. Free leaflets with timetables are available at ticket desks in train stations. Commuter lines complement the RER network, with which they share many connections.
D) The Tramway

Paris has 4 tramway lines serving the perimeter of the city: T1, T2, T3, T4.

Tram tickets are the same as those used on the metro and the RER in Paris.

E) The Bus

There are numerous bus lines and many buses go through the centre of the city, along the banks of the Seine, and through historic districts ...

64 bus lines run alongside and complement the metro network. The installation of special bus lanes along main roads has improved journey times. For an idea of your journey time, allow around 5 minutes per stop, sometimes more if the traffic is busy.

Buses operate from Monday to Saturday from around 7am until 8.30pm. Some lines operate in the evening between 8.30pm and 12.30am, in particular those departing from stations or which serve major metro/RER interchanges, as well as the 3 outer PC lines. Almost half of bus lines operate on Sundays and public holidays.

The line number and direction are indicated on the front of the bus, above the driver’s compartment, and on the sides of the bus. Put your hand out at the bus stop to indicate to the bus driver to stop.

At bus stops, electronic displays signs indicate the waiting time for the next bus to arrive. Bus stops are also sometimes equipped with USB ports for you to recharge your smartphone.

Bus stops comprise either of glass shelters or simple poles. They display the number of the bus lines serving the stop and a map of the bus routes followed. They also display the time of the first and last bus in service, as well as the average frequency at which buses serve the stop.

You get on the bus at the front and get off in the middle or at the back of the bus. On articulated buses, you get on and off through any of the doors; to open the doors, push the button next to the doors. Remember to punch your ticket or validate your pass. To request a stop whilst you are on the bus, press one of the red buttons in the bus. The ‘stop requested’ light appears in front of the driver’s compartment.

F) The Noctilien
The Noctilien is a night bus service that operates in Paris and the Paris region from 12.30am to 5.30am. 47 lines crisscross Paris and the Paris region so that everyone can get around by public transport.

You can use your travel pass or a metro/bus ticket if it covers the zones concerned (the same zones as for the metro/RER).


2- Tickets

There are numerous type of tickets. More information on the RATP website: https://www.ratp.fr/en/titres-et-tarifs

However, we suggest for a long stay that you subscribe to a “Pass Navigo” > unlimited travel pass. It allows you to travel through any zone, at anytime and as long as you need to.

You can pay the unlimited travel pass weekly, monthly or annualy.


Careful, If you're a -26 year-old-student: this pass is called “Imagin R travel pass”. It is less expensive for you.

For researchers, PhD students and postdoc: in France 50% of your public transport costs (carte Navigo in Paris) are reimbursed by your employer. It is a legal obligation.