Sounds like a contradiction? Doing the most expenisve, overpriced city in the world on a budget? Well, it can be done, and this senior couple "done" it. First, we had accumulated enough frequent flyer miles on American to fly free. We gathered the miles by paying for our daughter's Ivy League college tuition by credit card.

However, when we went aboard and were crammed like sardines into our five-across row of seats, we asked to move up to business class. For $80 each, we did our eight hours in the air in relative comfort. This happened several years ago, and such easy and inexpensive flights and upgrades may not be too available these days.

We started our Parisian cheapness campaign by not booking into the ritzy, grossly overpriced name-brand hotels. We selected an inexpensive little hotel adjacent to the university buildings of the Sorbonne. The room was dinky, but comfortable, and our window was across a very narrow street where we could look into the classrooms. We got to our third floor room in a clanking little elevator that had room for one fat or two skinny riders.

Our room cost $50 a day, and we considered going into an even cheaper youth hostel. But, after examining the dorm-like rooms and down-the-hall toilets, we knew we were just too old to do the crowded GI barracks routine. However, because we were in the university area, the cafes, delis and outdoor eating and drinking places were cheap and lively with young people.

Another way of saving money was to stay away from the infamous Paris taxis. Cole Porter wrote in "The Last Time I Saw Paris", "I dodged the same old taxicabs that I had dodged for years. The chorus of their squeaky horns was music to my ears." Forget it, Cole. Those grumpy guys today are not only rude, but a short ride could cost $20 for a clueless American tourist. One hackie glared as I was counting out francs from my wallet, let out a string of curses, grabbed a handful, jumped into his cab and raced away.

If you're physically fit, walking is a great way to see the streets, people, museums and other attractions of Paris. Also, to get to the near and distant sections of the city, there's the Metro subway system, where you can go anywhere for just a few dollars. While we knew high school French, the Metro at first was a puzzling maze. Fortunately, we hooked up with a French Canadian tourist couple who escorted us on our first venture, and after that, we rode the Metro everywhere.

Of course, we saw all the famed Parisian landmarks: the Arch of Triumph, the Louvre Museum, the Eiffel Tower, d'Orsay Museum, Notre Dame Cathedral, Pompidou Center, Napoleon's Tomb and many other sights. We made sure we got senior discounts and other savings whenever available.

We did try several of the upscale cafes, just to get the Paris atmosphere, but found them smoky and noisy. And too doggone expensive for the mediocre quality of food and fussy waiters. We were just as happy to find shops that sold delicious French deli fare. We ate many of our meals sitting on benches in the park, on steps outside museums or strolling along the Paris streets while munching our sandwiches and sipping coffee and hot chocolate. We're a bit ashamed to admit that we had several lunches in local burger joints McDonalds and Quicks, but actually preferred the French deli foods and pastries.

We managed to do our Paris experience for about $100 a day. It was less than one-third the price we'd have paid just to sleep for a couple of hours a night in one of the city's upscale hotels.