



Billie Holliday's "April in Paris" was a hit, and Gene Kelly danced as "An American In Paris". Dinah Shore mused "The Last Time I Saw Paris". Any time you visit, the City of Light is ever welcoming. And so are many other wonderful places in France.

A fun way to do it is to map out your own loose schedule and spend as much time as you want in each location. It's enjoyable to go with a group in a guided tour. However, to really experience the country, travel solo or with another roamer. Enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of France on your own schedule, or no schedule at all. Learn at least the elements of the French language before you go. The people there are very friendly to visitors, and enjoy hearing you speak their language. It may not get you lower prices, but could earn higher respect and cooperation.

Normandy is a beautiful wine and tourist area in Northern France, circled by its beaches just 22 miles from the white cliffs of England's Dover. It's also a living memorial to World War II British, American and Canadian soldiers, airmen and sailors who fought and died there to liberate France.

You must experience Paris, of course. The city is full of world-famous historic sights not be missed. The Eiffel Tower, the Arch of Triumph, the Louvre, Napoleon's Tomb, Notre Dame Cathedral, the University of the Sorbonne, a night-time cruise along the River Seine and many other places welcome visitors.

There also are cozy sidewalk cafes, exclusive shoppes and vintage taxicabs. Check in at one of the charming little hotels or hostels, and stay a week or two or four. You'll become so familiar with Paris, you'll be speaking French like a native. Well, at least like a Berlitz grad.

Aix au Provence is a lovely area in the beautiful garden lands of Southern France. It is where Van Gogh, Gauguin and other artists found their inspiration in the forests, fields and quaint little towns. The pace here is slower and more relaxed than in Paris, and the people more friendly to tourists, even if you can't say a complete sentence in French.

Nice is a ... well ... nice beach resort town on the Mediterranean coast of Southern France, sort of a combination of Atlantic City and Malibu, with a bit of Coney Island for the kids. Make your visit in September, when the usual high prices are not quite as high.

5. Monte Carlo, though an independent principality by the sea, is totally surrounded by France, and citizens there speak only French. It's a sort of fairy tale Las Vegas, where visitors can have all kinds of fun. Playing at the gambling tables, you'll mix with European royalty, shady gun-runners, Asian gangsters and, just maybe, the current James 007 Bond.