



Q: We're retired Canadians, and with limited pensions. We'd like to do a one-week visit to Paris. Friends just came back and they complained that the hotels and restaurants are even more expensive than ever, despite the economic turn-down. We love Paris, and we speak fair French, but how can we keep from being ripped off?

A: It ain't easy, considering tourism has always been big business in Paris, and there's a long tradition of emptying the pockets of visiting North Americans. The simplest answer is: don't be obvious, flashy tourists, and speak French everywhere. Stay away from the posh hotels and restaurants. Forget the taxi cabs: walk and/or ride the underground Metro.

And the oldest travel advice for dinner: go where the locals eat, and buy deli for breakfast and lunch. Small deli shops will make you sandwiches and salads to go. Sit in the park or on some monument's steps, enjoy a very inexpensive meal while watching the Parisian world go by.

Your biggest expense could be if you book yourselves into a major Paris hotel. You'll pay at least \$300 a night, plus tips, plus fancy meals, plus and more plus. Check the internet for the city's many inexpensive, small, boutique hotels and bed & breakfasts.

Check with your favorite neighborhood or online travel agency for information. We've followed Rick Steves' advice for doing Paris and other European cities at bargain prices very helpful. Go to ricksteves.com.

