

My summer vacation: The Eiffel Tower

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Part of our family summer vacation was spent in Paris, with excursions to nearby areas. We visited in August, which is the month that everybody goes on vacation. Some businesses close outright for the entire month. Other facilities take this time to do maintenance, renovations, or simply reduce their hours, taking advantage of the reduced demand. (The only people inconvenienced by the reduced services are tourists, and you don't have to be nice to them!)

The Eiffel Tower

For the Eiffel Tower, I strongly recommend taking the stairs to the first and second levels, if you are up to it. There's no line, and it takes only five minutes to get to the first level, and another five minutes to get to the second level. We did this with kids ages five to ten. They ascended faster than the adults!

Some Web sites say that it's 347 steps to the first level, and another 674 steps to the second level. They're wrong. It's 674 steps from the ground to the second level. Every dozen or so steps is marked with the step number, so you can track your exact progress.

You cannot take the stairs all the way to the top, so if going to the top is your thing, you can get a "stairs to second level, plus elevator to the top" ticket. However, these tickets are sold only on-site for immediate use; you cannot preorder them. The second level is already quite high; you're significantly higher than all the buildings in the area. We didn't go to the top.

We found that stairs-only tickets can be purchased online only a week or so into the future. I believe this detail is noted on the French-language version of the ticket-ordering page, but it's not mentioned on the English-language version.

The ticket-takers didn't appear to be strict about arriving exactly at the time printed on the ticket. We were an hour late and were waved on through. Probably because they understand that people get stuck in the security line for an unpredictable amount of time.

At the security checkpoint, there was a sign that depicted icons of various forbidden items. It was a very long list.

lit flare	dog	soda can	milk carton
gun	scissors	nunchucks	racist or violent literature
	rollerblade	flag	banner
large bag/suitcase		megaphone	lit cigarette
lit cigar?	drone	stick of dynamite?	gas canister?
		aerosol can	syringe

Security reserves the right to prohibit other objects not listed above which are incompatible with a normal visit.

I wonder what was in the blank spaces. Those are things that were once banned, but then were allowed.

The security checkpoint had an interesting side-effect: There were no street vendors inside the secured area. Instead, they congregated at the exit.

Bonus chatter: There is a viewing area on the Pont de Bir-Hakeim that is popular with photographers. If you continue south from the viewing area, you can walk down the central island to the other end, where you'll find a quarter-scale Statue of Liberty. That area felt kind of sketchy to me.

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