



Paris, France

The Marais District, Paris From Swamp to Marsh to *Magnifique*

By Abby Gordon

The *Marais* literally means “marsh,” and that is exactly what this Parisian neighborhood was one thousand years ago. Before the area was drained into a fertile marshland, it was a swamp, and unfortunately the swamp-like odors remained even centuries after the transformation. Narrow cobblestoned streets, exposed stone, and beamed-buildings with slanted walls and rooflines are still a common sight, a testament to the Marais’ medieval history.

As early as the 13th century, the Marais began to serve as the heart of Paris’

Jewish community. Today, the Marais is one of Paris’ most trendy and desirable neighborhoods. It is the hub of the gay community in Paris. The Marais is also home to many restaurants, cafés and boutiques, many of which stay open on Sundays, an unusual practice in France.

Despite this modernization, the Marais still retains so much of the medieval character that was bulldozed in the 19th and 20th centuries for bigger and better structures in other parts of the City of Light—but thankfully not the medieval smell. The most prevalent smell these

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FROM THE DESK OF KATHLEEN PEDDICORD:

Christmas Overseas

*'Tis the season to remember
All the faces and the places that were home*

*'Tis the season to remember
And to count up all the ports of call I've known*

*Merry Christmas to my saints and guardian angels
Who protect me as I roam
Guess my life's moved at near light speed
Since I started this wild and crazy run
Such a long way from that first birthday*

*'Tis the season to remember
No we're never far from home
Merry Christmas, everyone*

--"Merry Christmas, Alabama" by Jimmy Buffett

Dear Overseas Retirement Letter Subscriber,

Our seven Christmases in Ireland, we could never bring ourselves to participate in one of Ireland's quirkiest festive traditions, what the Irish refer to as the "Christmas Day swim."

On Christmas morning, from beaches, piers, and coves around the country, people of all ages gather to immerse themselves in waters of around 50 degrees Fahrenheit (maximum).

"Swim" is a bit of a misnomer. There is no particular distance that you need to cover, nor any agreed-upon duration you must stay in the water. You simply join the crowd of people running toward and then into the water (cheered on by well-wrapped-up spectators), screaming as their bodies hit the ice-cold sea. A quick splash of the arms and legs, then back in to shore to dry off, wrap up, and enjoy a hot drink or a shot of whiskey.

Wetsuits have appeared on the scene in recent years, mostly among the kids, but it remains an unspoken rule among the hardy adults taking part: Traditional bathing suits only.

Our four Christmases in Paris were all about the lights. Each year, starting in November, Boulevard St. Germain, just a few blocks from our apartment



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Kathleen Peddicord

Publisher

Lucy Culpepper

Managing Editor

Carlos R. López

Graphic Designer

Brenna LaBine

Editorial Assistant

If you have queries relating to your subscription, get in touch at: CustomerService@liveandinvestoverseas.com

For editorial comments and contributions, reach us at: Editorial@overseasretirementletter.com

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in this city, is strung with tiny white lights. The trees and the building facades are covered with them. Each morning and again each evening as I'd walk Jackson, aged 4 through 8 at the time, to and from school, we'd linger at the intersection of rue du Bac and Boulevard St. Germain as long as possible, looking up and down, up and down, slowly, working to fix that magical view in our memories. "It's a fairy land," 4-year-old Jack declared it one morning. I see it still.

Twinkling lights and decorated shop windows. This time of year, storefronts throughout Paris are draped with pine garland, and displays feature green trees flocked with white and trimmed with red and gold baubles. No one does shop windows like the French do shop windows, and no others compare with the shop windows of central Paris at Christmastime.

My fondest memory of Christmas in Panama, where we've been living for the past five years, is of our son's annual Christmas pageant.

Jackson, now 14, attends Panama City's French school, l'Ecole Paul Gauguin. Four years ago, this meant he went to school with about 75 other children. Today, Jack is part of a student body that numbers more than 600. I was surprised when we arrived to discover that Panama's French school had 75 students, many, also surprising to me, Panamanian. Why would a Panamanian family, living in Panama City, choose to send their children to a French-language, French-curriculum school? I still don't know the answer to that question, but today dozens more Panamanian families are opting for this approach to educating their kids.

Of course, all the students at Paul Gauguin aren't Panamanian. Jack is one of the few Americans. In addition, there are kids from families that call themselves Spanish, Mexican, Colombian, Irish, English, German, Chinese, Japanese, Canadian, and, yes, French. The parents of these wandering youngsters are in Panama as entrepreneurs, like Lief and me, or because the international companies they work for have placed them here. And, again, their numbers have increased eight-fold while we've been part of the charming community they create. L'Ecole Paul Gauguin is growing, and Jackson is growing with it.

Jack came to me this week to tell me he needs a red Santa hat and a green polo shirt. Would I please find these things for him at the mall this weekend?

"Ah, for your Christmas pageant?" I asked, excitedly. "Great. When is it? Dad and I always really enjoy the show."

"Parents of the older kids don't really come to it, Mom," Jackson responded. "Only the parents of the little kids come to watch. I just need you to get me the hat and the shirt."

Our first year in Panama, Paul Gauguin's Christmas pageant took place in the 300-year-old Teatro Anita Villalaz in the center of Casco Viejo's Plaza de Francia. Even back then, when the student body was much smaller than it is today, it made for as eclectic a collection of small children as you might ever find. Jackson introduced us to his friends from all over the world, some have names I couldn't pronounce even after Jackson repeated them for me three or four times. Finally, embarrassed for me, he gave up, suggesting that, if I have something to say to a particular child, he'd be happy to relay the message for me.

Some of these children, then and now, have lived in three or four other countries already, though they've only barely begun their little lives. Most speak Spanish and French; others also speak English, Italian, German, Japanese, Chinese... They switch among languages effortlessly and manage to communicate among themselves cheerfully and with far less misunderstanding than you might expect.

That first year, on stage in the grand old theater on the Plaza Francia, the young but worldly bunch from Ecole Paul Gauguin, Jackson among them, performed Christmas songs in Spanish, French, and English, including some we recognized and many we didn't.

"Children in Palestine and children in Israel, children from the Americas and also from China, this day, let us think only of Christmas," began one song in French.

At Jackson's birthday party last month, I had a chance to speak with some of his classmates' moms. Some have husbands working with the UN and other international organizations who have been posted in Panama for a year or two. Others are here for work related to various of this country's many infrastructure projects. They and their children have migrated to Panama from Mexico City or Caracas, Buenos Aires or Santiago, Paris or Madrid...

Lief and I worry sometimes about the life Jackson is living. Born in Ireland, he's since lived (and gone to school) in Paris... and now Panama City. He's an American by birth though his only experiences of the United States are his annual visits to see his grandmother and cousins in Baltimore. If you were to ask him, Jack would tell you that he's Irish, with the second passport to prove it. I wouldn't call him American or Irish or French either, though the parents of his friends are shocked always to discover that Jackson's parents are American, not French. "But Jackson is French, is he not?" they ask us, trying to make sense of Jack's perfect Parisian French in the context of our American English.

"No, he's American, like us," I explain, not sure how else to describe him.

Jackson is a little guy without a country but embracing the world. And, at the French school in Panama City, he's found about 600 other little guys and girls just like him who, one evening each year, join together to fill the tropical night with the sound of Christmas songs from around the world.

We'll spend Christmas Day this year with my family in Baltimore, my home town. I appreciate the chance to return to the place from which I launched my adventures overseas some 16 years ago at this time of year, the season for remembering and for taking stock. Where will 2014 lead us? I can't wait to find out.

On behalf of the entire far-flung staff of Live and Invest Overseas, please accept our warm and heartfelt wishes for a Merry Christmas, wherever you find yourself enjoying it this year, and our sincere hope that 2014 is the year your far-flung dreams of adventure overseas begin to come true.

All the best from our family to yours. We so appreciate your coming along with us for this ride.



Kathleen Peddicord
Publisher



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RETIREMENT PLANNING BY PAUL TERHORST

Stay Concerned, Don't Panic... But Act Sooner Rather Than Later

Beginning next year the U.S. government will tighten exchange controls on U.S. citizens and residents. We Americans will have an even tougher time opening bank accounts abroad, transferring money overseas, and otherwise going about our business. Here at LIO we've written a lot about the new law, called FATCA, and related controls. Many who live and invest abroad need to take action before the FATCA controls get fully phased in.

Vicki and I recently met a young couple in Bangkok who have an action plan. Larry is American, his wife from Singapore, they were married in Singapore. Larry desperately wants to get his assets out of the U.S. before FATCA bites. He has begun to transfer assets to his wife's name; she's NOT a U.S. citizen and can operate freely abroad. He eventually wants to get out from under the U.S. government altogether. After all, he figures he works outside the U.S. so he might as well try to disappear from U.S. tax rolls, perhaps by renouncing U.S. citizenship. (U.S. citizens like Larry must pay U.S. tax on worldwide income, including income earned overseas that's unrelated to the United States.)

I understand Larry's motivation, and generally agree with those who recommend we move money out of the U.S. On the other hand I think we've seen too much of an alarmist attitude about FATCA. I see good reasons for leaving at least some money, and perhaps even a lot of money, in the U.S.A.

As an example of the overly-alarmist talk, [Chase Bank recently announced](#) it would refuse to transfer money overseas for basic small business customers. Chase says most small businesses have little need for overseas wire transfers. Those who do need the transfers will have to upgrade their accounts. Chase plans to make money on the upgrades.

So, fine, chase wants to hike fee income, perhaps in response to extra costs under FATCA. Simple, straightforward; but many saw a dark side. I put "chase bank wire transfers" into google news and out popped the doomsayers: "New capital controls on withdrawals and transfers will kill small businesses;" "Chase to limit cash withdrawals, prohibit all outgoing international bank wires;" "Major financial institutions are getting ready for the chaos that is eventually coming;" Chase Bank is now placing a limit on cash withdrawals and is banning business customers from sending..."

See what I mean? Chase tries to make a few extra bucks on fees and we're suddenly warned of impending "chaos." I even got emails suggesting we'll soon see riots as food disappears, cash disappears, and more.

In my view Chase took a small step of little consequence.

Let's take a look at where FATCA came from in the first place. The 2010 law was tacked onto a jobs bill, rather than as part of a financial bill. Congress lacked the

money to pay for its jobs bill. So staffers knocked around for a way to paper over the shortfall, and came up with FATCA. Never mind that FATCA might generate very little fresh tax money. Congress went ahead and estimated FATCA would coax out hundreds of millions to pay for the jobs bill. Never mind that FATCA could cost ten times or even a hundred times more to implement than the fresh tax money the law hopes to nail. Congress needed FATCA to solve a political problem. That's the way Congress works.

So rather than an attempt to prevent Americans from doing business, buying houses, or living or investing abroad, FATCA was simply a ploy for Congress to raise a few bucks. We may be in for serious exchange controls down the line. We may see a dollar-collapse, and even a panic response down the line, too. I address these issues in the sidebar below. But I'm satisfied that FATCA amounts to a huge hassle but very little more. Further, I see little need for panic moves to get money out of the United States.

To me one of the big negatives to moving money overseas is cost. Swiss banks, for example, have a long history of gouging customers with safekeeping, exchange, account, transaction, wire transfer, investment, and other fees. You put money in a Swiss bank and you can almost guarantee that 10 years down the road you'll have less money than when you started.

In many countries besides bank fees you often have to pay attorneys, agents, and perhaps governments to obtain residency or otherwise obtain the right to open the account.

Not only do you have high costs banking overseas, but you'll need to consider estate planning when you open foreign accounts. Will your heirs fly to Singapore, say, to recover US\$50,000? How much time and hassle, how many lawyers and bankers will be involved? In my experience most overseas accounts go unclaimed. We know that Swiss banks have made a fortune over the centuries by simply hanging on to monies when account holders die without instructions for heirs.

Meanwhile U.S. banks offer excellent services at little or no cost. These days Charles Schwab and others even subsidize money market accounts, to prevent them from falling below a dollar. Schwab One and Fidelity Smart accounts come with no fees at all, not even foreign transaction fees (generally). These and some other accounts reimburse for most ATM fees, and charge very little for wire transfers and other services.

Even PayPal these days offers a no-fee debit card, provided you use it in the United States rather than overseas. Besides low cost, U.S. banks offer safety and convenience. We saw during the Great Recession that players acted quickly to prevent money market accounts from deteriorating. In banks the FDIC guarantees deposits up to US\$250,000. U.S. banks make services easily available online, anywhere in the world.

Note too that with U.S. accounts you can easily and efficiently invest in international stocks and funds. No need to keep an overseas account just to buy overseas funds.

Conclusion: If you need to move money abroad you should act sooner rather than later. You may have good and valid reasons—diversification, business needs, real estate purchases—to move money abroad. On the other hand I'm less concerned than the alarmists out there at leaving money in the U.S.

Absent special circumstances we should take advantage of the good deals Schwab, Fidelity, and others offer American customers.

Keep Calm And Carry On

Alarmists fear exchange controls and a collapse of the dollar. Either or both might come about because of America's huge budget deficits, easy money, trade deficits, and a dysfunctional Washington D.C. But I doubt either will come on very soon, or very fast, or be very bad, or otherwise cause panic.

First, the U.S. dollar is the world's reserve currency. Even if countries and their citizens lose faith in the dollar, they have only limited options. China and Japan, Korea and Taiwan will likely continue to buy U.S. debt NOT because they want to but because they have to. The big Asian buyers of dollar debt will suffer most in a dollar collapse. Logically, they'll help the Fed support the dollar.

Second, trillions of Eurodollars and Asiadollars—that is, dollars that circulate in Europe and Asia—will stay out there. So in the worst case scenario we'll likely have alternatives. Suppose, for example, the U.S. government bans dollar transfers abroad. One way or another Americans will still be able to transfer. Here's an example: in the United States Mr A transfers dollars to Mr B's account while B (who has an account abroad) transfers the same money to A's account abroad. Mr A or B might use intermediaries, a lawyer or trust accounts, for example. Venezuelans have been doing these transfers for decades. In general citizens of any country with exchange controls find ways around them.

Stay concerned, but don't panic. The dollar may fall but not collapse. Exchange controls will bite, but we'll still get around them. And the sun will rise in the morning, rivers will flow, and we'll find a way to enjoy ourselves as always, regardless of obstacles governments throw in our way.



...continued from page 1

days emanates from the numerous seductive *boulangeries* (bakeries) and *pâtisseries* (pastry shops). And built on what was once swampland, the land where my Marais apartment sits is not even deemed a flood zone.



Romantic with delicious smells to boot!

Just about anyone who took French in high school has thought, seriously or hypothetically, about moving to France one day. The romanticism of Hemingway's Paris or *Midnight in Paris* does still permeate central Paris, but it is juxtaposed against a certain reality that is not always as rosy. I am an American expat who has lived and worked in Paris for the last six years and who recently purchased property here in the Marais, one of Paris' most loved neighborhoods. In the following pages, I will confirm and expand upon the romantic notion of living in the Marais, as well as provide you with a dose of pragmatism to arm you for such an endeavor.

Overview: Why the Marais?

There is no shortage of material—histories, travel literature, guide books, websites, you name it—on Paris. While some of the information covered here will apply to any neighborhood in Paris or even any destination in France, I focus in particular on life in the Marais.

So what makes the Marais stand out from the other districts of Paris? To live in the Marais is to live in the heart—geographic, cultural, historical, architectural, and social—of this city that is considered by so many to be the ground zero of refined western culture. When you look through those rose-colored glasses at the romantic Paris of literature and movies, the cityscapes in your memories may well exist in the Marais.

[Take a look too at my video of the Marais](#), a brief, colorful tour of this beautiful slice of Parisian life.

Culture? Look No Further...

The Marais oozes culture and history. The neighborhood has an excess of historical sites and museums:

- Place des Vosges, including the home of Victor Hugo
- The rue des Rosiers and the historic Jewish quarter
- The Pompidou Center
- Hôtel de Sully
- Hôtel de Sens
- The Cognacq-Jay Museum
- The Picasso Museum (to reopen after extensive renovations in Spring 2014)
- The National Archives
- The Carnavalet Museum
- The European Photography Museum
- The Hôtel de Ville (including temporary exhibits)
- The Memorial of the Shoah
- The Museum of Jewish Art and History
- The Museum of the Hunt and Nature
- The Agoudas Hakehilos Synagogue
- The Nicolas Flamel and François Miron historic houses

...to name just a few. And if you expand the list to include other landmarks within a 20-minute walk, you add Notre Dame, Sainte-Chapelle, La Conciergerie, the Pantheon, the Louvre, and countless more. For access to the heart of Paris, there is no better location.



The History Library housed in the hôtel particulier of Diane de France, daughter of Henri II

The Marais is also a breeding ground for café culture, an epicenter of fine cuisine, and home to many a cozy bistro and open air market. Foodies will not be disappointed with the offerings within a stone's throw of their front door.

A Brief Interview with Nicholas Hardy, Poet, Architect, and Retired American Expat Resident of the Marais

Why did you choose the Marais over other neighborhoods in Paris?

I'd say my partner and I chose the Marais for its charm, its architecture, and its history...certainly its proximity to central Paris and the good Metro lines. We live in a building that once formed part of an ancient convent and we are just minutes from excellent small food shops and restaurants, not to mention the markets and tourist sites. For example, the Paris Opera is less than 15 minutes by foot, Notre Dame the same. Dare I say it? BHV (Bazaar de l'Hôtel de Ville Department Store) with its superb basement hardware—a destination of choice—is close by as well.

Were any other neighborhoods close contenders?

We looked around the rue Montorgueil, as well as other parts of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th *arrondissements*. We kept returning to the Marais however. It just seemed better located and you can't beat the sense of history walking the streets here.

What is your favorite part about living in the Marais?

I would say the proximity to good restaurants, museums (the Carnavalet is a favorite) and ease of transportation. And of course the Seine for a beautiful walk in the evening after dinner.

What is the biggest drawback to living in the Marais? To living in France in general?

To living in the Marais? Probably the crowds and the traffic. It can be quite congested on weekends. It goes beyond "lively". But of course, this is a city, not the country. To France in general? I don't see any great drawbacks to France. We both speak French more or less and are committed Francophiles, so we tend to view this all as a great adventure. There are so many things the French do better than we do in the U.S.

A Pretty Penny

Of course this could-be utopia is not without its drawbacks. Paris is an expensive city and the Marais is one of its most expensive neighborhoods. Property prices, both for owning and renting, are sky high for very little space. With these heightened prices come more expensive groceries, boutiques, dry cleaners, restaurants—you name it—than in most other neighborhoods, with the notable exception of the other expat-invaded Parisian neighborhood, Saint-Germain-des-Prés. I discuss the cost of living in the Marais in further detail below.

Rain or Shine

One more noteworthy negative: I have never heard of anyone moving to Paris for its weather. While it is fairly mild compared to some regions of the United States, averaging a high of 8°C (46°F) in December and January, its coldest months, and highs of 25°C (77°F) in July and August, the warmest months, there is not what we might call an abundance of *beau temps*. Rainfall is high year-round, with slight average dips in January and September. With an average 12 to 15 days per month with some form of precipitation, Paris rivals London for number of bleak, gray days. At least there's plenty to do indoors on those rainy days! And the other good news? There is rarely snow in Paris. When those flakes do fall, they rarely stick. And when they stick, they don't stay around for long.

A Very Short History of the Marais

In medieval times, I would have lived on passage du Petit-Saint-Antoine, which was then absorbed by rue des Rosiers. From the 13th century until the Dreyfus Affair, I would have lived on rue des Juifs (Street of the Jews). Post-Dreyfus Affair, I now live on rue Ferdinand Duval, named after a municipal council member (or the first guy they thought of when they decided rue des Juifs was bad publicity). The history of my little 1-block street in the Marais is a good reflection of the history of the *quartier*.

Famous residents of the Marais have included (until guillotined) Maximilien de Robespierre of French Revolution fame in the 18th century, and literary icon Victor Hugo in the 19th century. Among the 64,000 or so Marais residents counted in the last census is Dominique Strauss-Kahn, known for his role in French politics, his leadership in the International Monetary Fund, and...uh...other things too.



The Place des Vosges—every detail has a story to tell

For an enthusiastic guided exploration of the Marais, chock-full of historical anecdotes, I highly recommend [Paris Walks'](#) Marais Circuit 1 and Marais Circuit 2 walking tours on your next visit. In the meantime, here is a very brief history that could make Jules Michelet, author of *Histoire de France*, roll over in his Père Lachaise grave.

The Ancient Stuff

In the 3rd century B.C., Celtic fisherman settled Île de la Cité and in 52 B.C., Julius Caesar snatched up what is now Paris for the Roman Empire. The city of Lutetia, later renamed Paris, saw the beginning of a modern era with the initiation of the construction of Notre Dame Cathedral in 1163 A.D. Meanwhile, the swamp to the northeast of the cathedral was drained and became a fertile marsh or *marais*, and in 1176, Louis VII declared the area the vegetable garden of Paris and deferred to the local religious orders to tend the land.

Medieval Milestones and Renaissance Resurgence

Around 1360, new walls of the city are erected to include the Marais, and Charles V becomes the first of many kings and other nobility to live, at least part-time, in the district. By the 16th century, many of the streets bore the names they still bear today.

At the start of the 17th century, King Henry IV ordered construction of the Place des Vosges, with its iconic red-brick and stone arcades and steep slate roofs. *Hôtels particuliers* (mansions) started cropping up on every corner; over 200 remain in today's Marais.



The central and historic Place des Vosges

Jewish History

Jewish history in the Marais dates back to medieval times, when the Jews were expelled from the walled city of Paris, which did not yet include the Marais. Over the centuries, the community expanded around what was known as the *Pletzl* ("little place" in Yiddish), which covered the area enclosed by Place Saint-Paul to the south, rue Vieille du Temple to the west, rue Pavée to the east and rue des Rosiers to the north.



The Beit Yossef synagogue on rue des Ecoiffes

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the population grew, with immigration primarily from Eastern Europe and later also from Northern Africa. At the turn of the 20th century, the conviction for treason of Jewish military officer Alfred Dreyfus drove anti-Semitism to new heights in France. It was with this back-drop that the Parisians turned their backs on fellow Parisians. In July 1942, the Paris police, in complicity with the Nazis, rounded up many of the nearly 9,000 Jews living in the Marais (and more than 13,000 Jews in total). Many of

the victims were eventually sent to Auschwitz. It was not until 1995 that the French government, represented by President Jacques Chirac, apologized for its complicity.

Today, the Marais' Jewish community has largely been pushed out not just through anti-Semitism but by soaring real estate prices. Nonetheless, noticeable exceptions remain: synagogues, religious paraphernalia shops, bakeries, and the ubiquitous falafel eateries, to name a few. Most iconic of these falafel restaurants is of course L'As du Falafel on rue des Rosiers—though my personal favorite is the less commercialized Pitzman on rue Pavée. Another notable legacy of the Jewish tradition in the Marais is that a number of shops and restaurants are closed on Saturdays but open on Sundays.



The famed (but closed for the day) L'As du Falafel

Marais Pride

With all this talk of historical importance, it is easy to surmise that the Marais has already seen its glory days. This is far from the truth. The neighborhood has evolved by leaps and bounds beyond the sewage-filled street-ghetto of medieval times and has seen a marked “trendification” in just the last decade or two.

After World War II, the Marais was in bad shape. Buildings were crumbling. The neighborhood was to be flattened and rebuilt from scratch. But conscious of its historic importance, Minister of Culture André Malraux put the neighborhood under a protection order in 1962 and thwarted any demolition. Slowly, with the help of state money, the *hôtels particuliers* (city mansions) were renovated (including the Hotel Salé, now the Picasso Museum, renovated in the 70s and once again this year).

Little by little, the gay community started moving into the Marais, and with it the cafés, wine bars, restaurants, boutiques, and unfortunately the higher prices, that often follow this trend-setting population. By the mid-1980s, the Marais, and in particular its southwestern corner, became known as Paris' gay neighborhood.



Wine bars and eateries are in no short supply

The beauty of the Marais' modernization is its ability to progress without losing its traditional character. Strict zoning laws protect the architectural and historical magnificence of the neighborhood. Nonetheless, modernity does have its place in the neighborhood. There is construction everywhere you look, some new developments and some representing renovations of older buildings. Most notably, 2013 has seen the renovation of a 1640 *hôtel particulier*, Hôtel Voysin in the 3rd arrondissement, into 50 condos. The eastern end of the 4th arrondissement will see the completion of a new condo building along the Seine in 2014. This structure called the Nouvelle Vague (New Wave) will offer 73 residences on Quai Henri-IV.

One initiative of City Hall and the 4th arrondissement's mayor's office is to continue making the Marais more and more pedestrian friendly. The Sunday pedestrian and cyclists' zone (from 10AM to 6PM) keeps expanding so that it now stretches

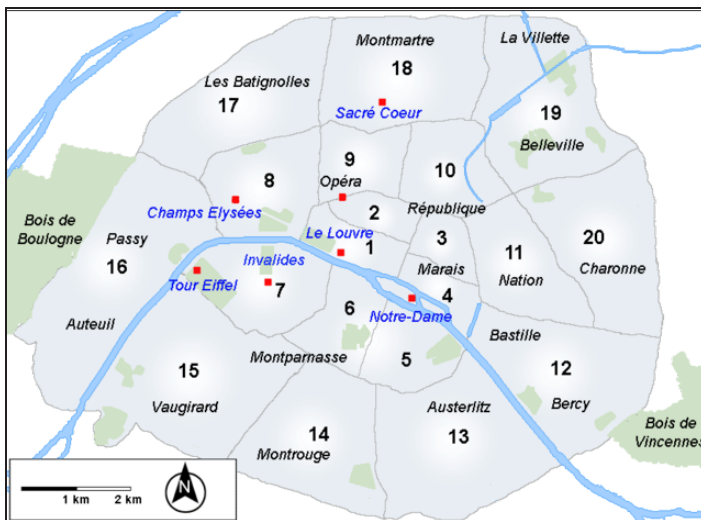
throughout a large section of the neighborhood, which you can view [here](#).

Murder in the Marais

With all the literature that has been written by authors based in the Marais and about life in Paris and the history of the city, there is not much out there specifically focusing on the Marais. However, I recommend picking up a copy of Cara Black's *Murder in the Marais*. Accompany female detective and protagonist Aimée Leduc as she tries to solve the mystery of a slain elderly Jewish woman, a woman who survived the injustices of the Nazi occupation during World War II only to be murdered decades later in an apparent attack of anti-Semitism. This fast-paced mystery novel will transport you to the cobblestoned streets and narrow passageways of the Marais and to the center for the Jewish community in Paris.

A Lesson in Geography

Paris is divided into 20 administrative districts or *arrondissements* each with its own distinct history and culture that spiral outwards in numerical order from the nucleus.



Paris' 20 arrondissements—the Marais straddles the 3rd and 4th

The neighborhood known as *Le Marais* is composed of the 4th arrondissement to the south and the 3rd arrondissement to the north, which combined cover less than three square kilometers of Paris' 87 square kilometers held together by the *boulevard périphérique* or "beltway." Three square kilometers makes the district roughly the size of New York City's Central Park.

The Marais is on the *Rive Gauche* (Right Bank), stretching between the Centre Pompidou and Hôtel de Ville (Paris' City Hall) in the west and Bastille to the east. The River Seine forms the Marais' southern border, although the 4th arrondissement also claims the Seine's most famous islands, Île Saint-Louis and Île de la Cité—at least the eastern half that includes the world famous Cathedral of Notre Dame—as its own. The 3rd arrondissement is often referred to as the "Upper Marais"—*Haut-Marais*, not to be confused with *marée haute*, which means "high tide."



Gorgeous details to be found in the 3rd arrondissement

Transportation at a Glance

Allons-y! Let's Go!

Most major cities in North America and Europe and many other cities worldwide have direct flights to Paris. That's the easy part. Unfortunately, there is no "good" way to get from the airport (likely Charles de Gaulle—or "Roissy" as the natives call it—if you are flying internationally) into the city. But there are numerous "OK" ways, including private car service, public taxis, shared car service, city bus (direct from Charles de Gaulle to Opéra), Air France coach buses, and the RER (commuter rail train). The RER costs only €9.50 each way and in about 45 minutes you can travel to Châtelet-Les Halles, just a few minutes' walk or one metro stop from the western edge of the Marais.

There are two great things about living in Paris when it comes to ease of access. First, your weekend travel possibilities are practically unlimited. Even if you don't drive, you will never run out of fabulous destinations accessible by train or a short plane ride. The second advantage, coupled with Paris being

Paris, is that everyone will always want to come visit you. Trust me, you will never feel alone in Paris—your friends and family will be on your doorstep before you know it!



You'll be welcoming lots of visitors through your doors

About Town

Others may disagree, but in my opinion, the Paris metro is the best in the world. With the exception of the annoyance of getting to and from the airport, it's very easy to move around in Paris. Nothing within the city walls is more than 30 to 45 minutes from the Marais by metro or bus, and most of your destinations will be accessible by foot. Line 1 runs east-west through the heart of Paris' right bank, and anywhere in the 4th arrondissement will be within a 5- or 10-minute walk of either the Hôtel de Ville or Saint-Paul metro station. Lines 3, 4, 8, 14, and 11 also run through the Marais. If you prefer the bus (which is also handicapped accessible; the metro stations are not always), the network is excellent. Both the metro station and the *abribus* (bus stop shelters) have electronic signs indicating how many more minutes there are until the next metro or bus is due to arrive. Compared to the United States this is high tech!

Ready to Leave Already?

Whenever possible, I prefer to travel by train. The Marais' great advantage in this respect is proximity to the Gare de Lyon, and



17th century Saint-Paul-Saint-Louis Church at Place Saint-Paul

the TGV (*Train à Grande Vitesse* or high speed train, and I'm not just talking Acela-speed) service to the south of France. Door to door from the Marais, you could be in Burgundy in less than three hours or Avignon, Aix-en-Provence, or Marseille in less than four hours.

If flying is more your style, the Paris region is home to three international airports: Charles de Gaulle-Roissy to the north, Orly to the south (an easy taxi ride from the Marais at off-peak hours) and Beauvais (with coordinated transportation from Porte Maillot, also along the metro's Line 1). The proliferation of low-cost airlines in recent years has seen the number of destinations reachable by direct flight soar.



Car stereotypes still exist!

If you prefer to rent a car, the good news is that rental car rates are generally much lower in France than in the U.S. The bad news is the traffic getting out of Paris, which seems to have only gotten worse in recent years, despite Mayor Bertrand Delanoë's continued attempts to discourage car traffic in the city.

But be forewarned: these lower rental-car rates only apply to manual transmissions; automatic transmissions are few and far between and double the price.

The Expat Community (a.k.a. Your New Best Friends)

Opportunities for social connection are crucial when moving to new place. And while it would be a shame to stick entirely to an expat world in Paris, the biggest mistake one can make in this city is to shun that expat community. In all likelihood, those other expats will end up being your closest friends in Paris, so it's best to start getting to know the community right from the start. The Marais arguably offers the best of both worlds for expat residents: the ability to toggle between an Anglophone home-away-from-home and *La France*.

Roughly a quarter of the Marais' population was born outside Metropolitan France, so as an expat living in this neighborhood, you will certainly not be alone. For some, it's actually a negative that so much English can be heard in the streets, cafés, and restaurants of the Marais. But aside from the sheer numbers, the organization of the expat community is impressive. Few foreign cities have as strong and as established an Anglophone expat community as Paris.

Social Groups, Political Organizations & Business Networks

A number of social groups of expats and other internationally minded residents have sprung up in Paris, enabled by the Internet. [Meet-up groups](#) cover just about every interest you could imagine. Networks such as [A Small World](#) and [InterNations](#) allow for online networking and also organize frequent events in Paris to bring people together.

Both [Democrats Abroad](#) and [Republicans Abroad](#) have strong roots in Paris and organize frequent events, particularly running up to elections. On U.S. election night the groups sponsor election night parties that run until the results are in and then some. [WICE](#) is an Anglophone association that

focuses on easing expats' transition to life in France. The group organizes a number of classes and social, educational, and cultural activities, but is perhaps best known for their annual writers' conference. WICE also coordinates a number of volunteer positions (see below for more details).

American Chamber of Commerce in France (<http://www.amchamfrance.org/en/>) offers a number of networking opportunities for its members (or employees of members).

God Still Speaks English, Even in France

Paris has several English-language religious communities, including the American Cathedral (Episcopalian, in the 8th arrondissement), the American Church (inter-denominational Christian, in the 7th arrondissement), and the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (7th arrondissement).

[The American Church of Paris](#) first started in 1814, earning recognition as the first American church outside the U.S. and its territories. In addition to the religious services it offers for English-speakers, the American Church is particularly active in the community and, through its Franco-American Community Center, offers educational, social, and cultural activities throughout the week and throughout the year.

American Culture in France?

[The Mona Bismarck American Cultural Center](#) in the 16th arrondissement takes a multi-disciplinary approach to promoting American cultural heritage in Paris, on behalf of American expats and also as a means of fostering Franco-American cooperation. They offer exhibits, talks, workshops, concerts and a number of other opportunities and events throughout the year. In conjunction with the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and in recognition of November as national photo month in France, they displayed an exhibit of Yousuf Karsh's celebrity photographs. Amongst those captured by this Armenian-Canadian-American photographer are JFK, Charles de Gaulle, Bill and Hillary Clinton, Ernest Hemingway, Princess Grace of Monaco, Brigitte Bardot, and Albert Einstein.

Volunteer Opportunities

With a work visa and French-language skills, there are a number of opportunities for part-time work. But even without the French language skills, if your immigration status

allows, you may be able to find work, and you will certainly have no problem finding English-language *travail bénévole* (volunteer opportunities).

[Espace Benevolat](#) has a dedicated coordinator of English-speaking volunteers. The SOS Helpline assists persons with depression or other similar emergencies and is always looking for English-speaking volunteers to help answer calls.

The American Church in Paris organizes a number of volunteer opportunities for English speakers who wish to be more involved in the church community.

[WICE](#) is run by volunteers of all ages and nationalities and is always looking for additional hands to keep this organization running and provide the community with classes and events. They have over 60 volunteers who work in areas such as curriculum development, marketing and communication, administration of the organization, community relations and website and database maintenance.

English-Language Books

There are a number of locations in Paris to find English-language books. Just across the river from the Marais is the famous [Shakespeare and Company](#), founded by American expat and veteran George Whitman. Shakespeare and Company embodies the history of so many well-known Anglophone expats.

Time Out Paris Magazine provides [a list of other English bookstores](#) in the city.

If borrowing books is more your style, [the American Library](#) in the 7th arrondissement not only lends books, but it also organizes frequent talks by authors and a number of other events for adults and children alike.

Parlez-Vous Français?

“Parlez-vous anglais?” will get you quite far in the Marais. That’s if you aren’t immediately greeted in English before opening your mouth. It’s entirely possible to get along in Paris 99% of the time without knowing any French. The other 1% of the time would be when dealing with any of the utility companies—you’ll need a good francophone friend to make those calls for you. Despite the increase in English speakers in



King Henri IV's Place des Vosges

Paris in recent years, learning French is key to feeling like you truly belong, and key to the desire to stay long-term.

Luckily, there are a number of options for learning or bettering your French when you arrive. Of course you can take traditional courses or private lessons.

But a good way to expand your social circle is to look for a “conversation buddy”:

- Via sites such as [Conversation Exchange](#)
- Through the innovative speed dating-style language exchange program offered at a reasonable cost by [Franglish](#)
- Through a [Meetup group](#) (or join one to practice your French before you leave home!)
- Through conversation nights at the American Church (see above).

TV, Sports Bars, and Other True Essentials (like whole berry cranberry sauce)

If you are concerned about not having the comforts of home when you arrive in Paris, know that there is very little in terms of Anglophone products that you cannot find in or a hop, skip, and jump from the Marais.

Several online services now allow for watching U.S. and U.K. television overseas. If you are outside the U.S. only, you can pay for a season’s subscription to watch major league baseball and football. Several sports bars in town will show the major games.

Almost all foreign movies in Paris are now in original version (VO). And there is no shortage of movie theaters in Paris (see below for more on that).

The Marais is also home to the [“Thanksgiving” store](#), a shop on rue Saint-Paul that carries pretty much any American product that you won’t find in a normal supermarket, and most notably all the products you need to replicate an authentic American Thanksgiving dinner (Ocean Spray cranberry sauce, Jiffy corn muffin mix, Stove Top stuffing, etc.) You can even order a pre-cooked turkey.

For the List Lovers

I have already listed some of the better-known English-speaking organizations. However, [Paris Voice also has a more comprehensive list](#). And, the [Council for the English-Speaking Community website](#) lists additional cultural organizations on its website.

[AngloINFO for Paris and Île-de-France](#) is another invaluable resource for the expat community in Paris, providing information on moving, schools, English-language movies and events, English-speaking contractors, plumbers, and other necessities, as well as an English-language classifieds section.

Finally, the English-language magazine [FUSAC](#) is a great resource for expats once you are on the ground. It’s a free magazine that can be picked up at a number of locations throughout the city frequented by expats.

The French (sigh...)

No discussion of community in Paris would be complete without a discussion of the French. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of French people who speak at least some English. Particularly in the Marais, you would likely have no trouble managing with English alone. But it would be hard to live in a community where you interacted with other expats alone.

The truth is the French are not always easy to deal with. At least, the *Parisians*. Even Parisians complain about other Parisians. Customer service is not what you are accustomed to, coming from the Anglophone world. The French version of “The customer is always right” is “*Le client est roi*,” or “The client is King.” Need I remind you of Louis XVI’s fate? It’s not uncommon for a Parisian shopkeeper to raise his or her voice at *you*, the customer. A quick example—I was noting down prices at the local grocery store (the Franprix on the corner of rue Roi de Sicile and rue Ferdinand Duval), for the purpose of

the [grocery list for this article](#). A manager came over and told me to stop. When I explained that I was writing an article for people who are thinking of moving to the neighborhood (i.e. I was not working for the competition), he rightly pointed out that I did not have an ID card stating that I did not work for another grocery store. When I told him I was trying to promote the neighborhood, he told me the Marais already had publicity and there was no need for me to provide more.

There is a certain disconnect in the logic that I will never understand, and you just learn to accept it. But there are also certain customs you will learn over time that make getting along with the French easier. For example, if you go in a store and do *not* say, “*Bonjour, Madame*” or “*Bonjour, Monsieur*” to the shopkeeper right away, it’s you who is being rude and you will not be treated well.

It is not always easy to make friends with Parisians. In large part, this is because they have a strict definition of *amis* (close friends) and if you are not a cousin, not a friend from *maternelle* (nursery school), or a friend from the first week of university, you are unlikely to make the cut. The door is a bit more open for potential *copains* (buddies), but you are often reminded that you are not in the higher ranks of friends.

All this being said there are lovely French and even lovely Parisians out there; it just takes a bit of time to find them. My closest French friends are generally ones who have lived overseas at some point and have a more open mentality. Once you get to know the local shopkeepers and restaurateurs and they get to know you, all of a sudden the customer service is sky high.

Cost Of Living— The Good, The Bad, And The Ugly

Paris is a major city and the Marais is central Paris, and among the most expensive Parisian neighborhoods. While a falafel at Pitzman will run you only €5.50 to go or €6.50 eating in, an average 3-course dinner out with wine may cost ten times that, and a few restaurants in town will run you 100 times. As with any city, there’s a range of prices. As a comparison for you, I would say that overall, Paris is a bit cheaper than London or Manhattan but a bit more expensive than Boston or Washington, D.C. Your essential costs may be reasonable, but there is a limitless supply of non-essential expenses that may be hard to resist. For an average monthly budget, I have

drawn up a sample [“Monthly Budget” here](#). But it is just a sample, and your actual budget will depend on your personal priorities and how much you travel, dine out, go to a show, etc. A couple owning a one-bedroom apartment outright (i.e. not including a monthly mortgage) could live comfortably from €1,600 to €1,800; a couple renting a one-bedroom apartment would need to add about €1,700 to that figure for their monthly total.

Senior discounts do not seem to be as common as student or youth discounts in France. Nevertheless, there are notable rate reductions on the SNCF trains (generally about 25% off or more with a Senior Card) and some museums offer discounts for over 60s.

What may be most useful in conceptualizing the cost of living in Paris and in the Marais specifically is the following review of some of the surprises—what is noticeably more or less expensive in the Marais compared to most other major cities.

La Bouffe

As I mentioned above, the cost of *la bouffe*, slang for “food”, is quite variable, depending on your tastes and how much you eat out versus cook in.

The Marais, while an expensive neighborhood in terms of rent, does seem to have more options for lower cost dining than some neighborhoods, particularly compared to the neighborhoods in the more residential western side of the city (for example the 7th and the 16th).

My strategy for keeping to a budget in Paris, while still eating out and eating well, is twofold: non-French food and picnics. First, I don’t waste my money going to mediocre French restaurants. I don’t go to the very expensive ones either, but I find that you need to spend between about €40 and €60 per person for a worthwhile 2-3 course meal with wine. So, when I want to eat out well and eat for less, I choose a non-French restaurant. You can get a decent Japanese, Thai, or Italian meal for as little as €15-€25 per person. Second, I mix up the restaurant eating with picnics in the nicer weather. Picnics are a great way to be social and out with friends and keep costs low.

On the topic of picnics, there are a few food items that seem incredibly cheap in Paris, and they happen to be the building

Here’s a short grocery list to give you an idea of supermarket prices in the Marais. For a complete shopping cart of items see my online [“Marais Shopping Cart.”](#)

Grocery Item	Quantity	Price in pesos (PHP)
Butter, imported	250 grams	1.73
Milk	1 liter	1.48
Orange juice	1 liter	2.18
Pepsi	1.25 liter	1.79
Wine	750 ml.	4.50 and up
Beer	6 bottles (1664)	5.71
Water	1 liter	0.65
Ham, sliced, local	160 grams	2.92
Chicken quarters	280 grams	3.92
Beef, sirloin	600 grams	12.05
Apples	1 kg.	1.75
Bananas	1 kg.	1.99
Eggplant	1 kg.	3.79
Potatoes, white	1 kg.	1.75
Broccoli	1 kg.	4.49
Ketchup	460 grams	1.76
Peanut butter, Skippy	350 grams	4.66
Bread, sliced white	1 loaf	2.35
Toilet paper	8 rolls	4.49
Laundry soap, local brand	1.8 liters	9.03

blocks of any good picnic: wine, bread, and cheese. You can have an excellent meal for €10 per person and your view may likely be better than from any restaurant. Baguettes are generally a fixed price in Paris at €0.85. Cheese prices vary, but you can get a great chunk of goat cheese for around €3.50.

Paris convention centers host a number of wine fairs each year where you can taste your wine before purchasing and you pay the price you would pay at the vineyard. I have purchased a number of excellent *blancs*, *rosés*, and *rouges* from these fairs for between €4.50 and €6 per bottle.



Buy a baguette from one of the Marais' seductive boulangeries

Utilities and all that Jazz

I discuss the housing market—both renting and buying—below. Although housing prices run high, most of the fringe costs are much lower than in the United States. For example, I own property in the state of Maine and pay approximately US\$3,700 per year in property taxes. For my Marais apartment (which is valued at about 30% more than the property in Maine), I pay roughly €700 or US\$900 per year. My electricity bill (including electric heat) for a 34-square-meter (365-square-foot) apartment runs about €40 per month. My *charges de co-propriété* (condo fees) run about €140 per month. In Maine, I pay about US\$160 per month for cable TV and Internet/Wi-Fi. In Paris, I pay just €30 per month (incredible!) for cable TV, Internet (DSL including Wi-Fi) and a landline (also through DSL, which allows me to make landline calls to over 106 countries for free and U.S. and Canadian landlines and cell phone for free). Just about every service provider in France (SFR, Orange, Noos, Free, etc.) has similar rates. My "[Marais Monthly Budget](#)" summarizes all these costs.

On the Move

A monthly *Navigo* card, the metro pass, will run you just over €65 per month, and you get a slight discount if you sign up

for an annual subscription. If you tend to stick close to home, though, the monthly pass may not be worth the money. Use of your own two feet will only run you about €8.40 per month in *ampoule* (blister) bandages!



Another inexpensive mode of transport

About six years ago, the mayor of Paris introduced a virtually free bike-sharing service. Called *Vélib'* (short for *vélo libre*), users pay €29 per year and have access to a network of over 20,000 bikes available in and around Paris at over 1,800 stations. The first 30 minutes are free (or first 45 minutes with a slightly higher annual subscription fee of €39). If you would like to ride longer (and do not want to be charged), just put your bike back at one of the stations, wait five minutes, then take another bike. The clock will restart. It's a fabulous system, but I must say, you need nerves of steel to ride a bike in most parts of Paris. Some brilliant person thought up the idea of bikes sharing a lane with the crazy taxis and the wide public buses... cycle at your own risk! Some brilliant person thought up the idea of bikes sharing a lane with the crazy taxis and the wide public buses... cycle at your own risk! You can see the *vélo libre* on my [video of the Marais](#).



Possibly the only car fit for the Marais

The greatest saving when you live in the Marais is that you do not need a car. In fact, you'd be a little crazy to have a car there—it would serve only for getting out of town on the weekends and the price of parking would far exceed the price of an occasional car rental. I find rental cars to be much cheaper in Paris than in the U.S. I usually rent through www.autoeurope.com (for longer term rentals) or www.autoescape.com (for long weekends). For a two-week and also a two-month rental this year, AutoEurope charged me about US\$15 per day. Of course, expect to pay about double as you would in the U.S. for gas and a significant amount in tolls if you take the *autoroutes*. (Very roughly, tolls cost €10 per hour of driving.)

Cultural Events & Exhibitions

The mayor's office is just one entity that sponsors an immense number of cultural events each year, and many of these events are entirely free. For example, the Hôtel de Ville (town hall) always has some exhibit up (usually featuring photography) that is free to the public. In the summer, there are free concerts. *Fête de la Musique* on June 21, the longest day of the year, sees concerts on nearly every corner of the Marais. *Nuit Blanche* in October is an evening when most sites open their doors to the public at no cost, until the wee hours of the night. *Vernissages* (gallery openings) are quite common, though often by invite only. You can always find some sort of free entertainment in the Marais!

Clothes & the *Soldes*

While the price of clothing runs high, summer and winter sales (*soldes*) offer incredible discounts if you have the patience to battle the crowds. Sale dates are dictated by law; even the start of the second and third price reductions is set by the government, so all stores lower their prices on the same day. It took me a while to get my head around this concept when I first moved to France. But the sales are a phenomenon that seems to take over the whole city for this twice-yearly 3-week period.

On the topic of clothing, one service in Paris that in my opinion is priced astronomically high, with no real alternative available, is dry cleaning. If you move to Paris, don't bring any clothes that need to be dry-cleaned!



Prêt à porter chic in place of bread

Splish Splash

Joining a gym can be pricey (or not, if you don't mind a dirty gym that's only open a few hours a day). But there are two notable deals in the area of fitness: public pools and sporting goods.

Paris houses 38 public pools, listed [here](#). For all but five of the pools, the entrance fee is only €3, or €24 for 10 entries, or €37 for a 3-month pass. A number of the pools are open at night (at least certain days) and some are outdoors. The pools offer group classes, but they also offer very affordable lessons. It is just €13 for a 30-minute lesson or €56 for six lessons. One of the public pools is located in the Marais: the Saint-Merri pool at 16 rue du Renard.

My favorite store in France is Decathlon (www.decathlon.fr), your source for any and all sporting goods imaginable (and some you never knew existed). It's also the one store that seems ridiculously cheap. For most clothes, electronics (camera, iPhone, laptop), and other non-urgent purchases, I purchase in the U.S. and bring the item back over. But sporting goods and workout clothes I always buy in France. My most recent purchases were a high-tech, thermal long-sleeve shirt for just €7.95 and touch-sensitive gloves for use with an iPhone for €6.95.

The Big Screen

I am convinced that Paris has more movie theaters per capita than any other city in the world. (Some brief Internet research told me that in fact Mumbai holds this title but I just don't believe it.)

Over 300 films per week play somewhere in Paris' city limits, and while each individual *scéance* (showing) is not cheap at about €10.90 on average, it is possible to make movie-going cheap by using and abusing the unlimited pass. The Carte UGC *Illimité* is currently €20.08 per month or €35.50 for a pass for two people (seeing the same movie). Gaumont's *Le Pass* is now at €21.90 per month (or €36.80 for a 2-person pass). Essentially if on the 1-person pass you see

two movies per month you break even and with three movies per month you save money. The UGC network also includes MK2 theaters and both networks cover many of the independent movie theaters, which means that these movie houses stay in business, you still have access to more artsy and independent films, and you can still go to the movies once in a while with friends with the "other" pass.

La Vie Quotidienne (Daily Life): A Typical Day in the Marais

7:00am: Wake up, stroll over to La Favourite (6 rue de Rivoli) to grab a cup of coffee, OJ, and a croissant (approximately €10.50), and catch up on your *New York Times* subscription via iPad and La Favourite's super speed Wi-Fi. Or if the weather's nice, maybe you prefer to grab a croissant (approximately €1.05) at Aux Désirs de Manon (129 rue Saint-Antoine) and take advantage of the free Wi-Fi in Square Georges Cain on Rue Payenne.

8:30am: Head over to the public pool at Saint-Merri (16 rue du Renard) for a swim. Don't forget, speedos (not shorts) are obligatory for men, and bathing caps are obligatory for all.

10:00am: Stop by BHV (the Bazaar de l'Hôtel de Ville Department Store) on rue de Rivoli to buy some light bulbs, batteries, and other DIY items from their Home Depot-esque basement.

11:00am: November is Photo Month in France and Democrats Abroad, the Kennedy Library in Massachusetts, and the Paris Mayor's Office, among others, are co-sponsoring an exhibit including some never-before-on-public-display photos of JFK and the Kennedy family to mark the 50th anniversary of JFK's assassination. Swing by this exhibit on rue Froissart in the 3rd arrondissement (€10).

12:30pm: You've caught on that the French eat lunch at exactly 1:00pm. So you decide to beat the crowds and grab a table at Pamela Popo (15 Rue François Miron) and dig in to a dish of sautéed scallops (€25).

2:00pm: Volunteer for a couple of hours with the SOS Helpline, answering calls from English speakers in need.

4:00pm: Make a few calls back to relatives in the U.S. before they leave for work (it's free from your landline!)

4:30pm: Pick up a *poulet rôti* (roast chicken) from one of the vendors on Place Saint-Paul, some cheese (perhaps the truffle goat cheese?) from *fromagerie* Pascal Trotté (97 rue Sainte Antoine) and a baguette from Paul (89-91 rue Saint Antoine). Swing by the supermarket for some veggies and toilet paper (yes, not everything in Paris is romantic!)

5:00pm: Meet a friend for a quick *apéro* (€5 for a glass of Coteaux de Languedoc) at Les Philosophes (28 rue Vieille du Temple).

6:00pm: Head home for a rest and catch the latest news on CNN or BBC World.

7:00pm: Throw the chicken in the oven to warm it up and prepare some sides. Dining at home tonight!

8:30pm: It's a clear evening—why not take a quick stroll down to the River Seine, then along the *quais* to the Hôtel de Ville to gaze at the magnificent lighting of this architectural marvel?

10.30pm: *Bonne nuit!*



Place Saint-Paul—a fine place to buy your poulet rôti

The Property Market

There are a number of real estate agencies in the Marais that will assist with property purchases or rentals. One thing to keep in mind, however, is that France does not have a multiple listing service. That means, you cannot work with one real estate agency and ask them to show you all available properties for purchase or for rent; they will only show you their own listings. Searching for an apartment can therefore be a frustrating and time-consuming process. Many agents will simply not call you back.

If you do decide to “go it alone,” there are a few websites that will be useful: [SeLogger](#) is probably the closest you will come to a multiple listing, with most rentals and homes for sale listed there. [De Particulier à Particulier](#) is another handy site, with listings posted directly by owners. If you are lucky enough to navigate this system successfully, you can save a fair bit of money by avoiding agents’ fees.

Despite the potential cost savings by searching on your own, I would highly recommend hiring a “house hunting” specialist to assist you. This person will look at any listings (as they do not generally have their *own* listings) in the first instance for you, and try to be the first to visit. They will help you through the process of renting or buying and signing the lease or purchase agreement, they know which questions to ask, and they can help you with securing a mortgage if you are purchasing. I would recommend working with Tahminae Madani of both [Flat Hunter](#) and [France Home Finance](#), Kim Bingham of [Philip Hawkes](#) or Miranda Bothe of the [Paris Property Group](#).

Buying

The property market in the Marais is not cheap (unless you are coming from Manhattan), but most will agree that Paris and the Marais is unlikely to go out of fashion anytime soon. I am fairly confident that the investment is a solid one—confident enough to have purchased an apartment in the Marais myself! Although overall real estate prices have dropped just slightly in Paris in the last year or two, prices in the Marais have effectively remained the same. While you do not get a lot of space for your money, you do often get more character than you might in other locations and even in other neighborhoods of Paris. For example, exposed stone and/or beams are not uncommon.

Purchasing property in the Marais will run you anywhere from €6,634 to €16,366 per square meter, or more precisely an average of about €10,890 per square meter in the 4th arrondissement and an average of about €10,200 per square meter in the 3rd arrondissement. To put that in perspective, an average one-bedroom, 50-square-meter apartment would run you €527,250 (or US\$713,487 for a 538-square-foot apartment). Prices of course depend on the exact location, the floor—*rez-de-chaussée* or ground floor is cheaper—whether or not there is an elevator and/or *guardian(ne)* (not quite a doorman, but a person who lives on the premises and who is generally around to take care of building matters) and how recently the apartment was renovated.

As in any country, there are peculiarities to purchasing property in France, for example, payment of a notary fee that runs about 6-7.5%. It’s best to be thoroughly informed about the process before jumping in. First and foremost, be sure to understand your financial options before commencing any property search. Securing a mortgage in France as a foreigner is not impossible, but you may be subject to higher interest rates and a higher percentage down payment if you are not considered a tax resident of France. French banks are also less accustomed to looking at alternative income sources and can be very stubborn about not lending you an amount greater than what would calculate to be monthly mortgage payments under a third of your monthly guaranteed fixed salary or income. I recommend speaking with Tahminae Madani (see sidebar “French Mortgages” to learn more about your options. See “[Buying a property in France](#)” for more details on the process of purchasing a property.

On the topic of cost, I should touch on subject I unfortunately know all too well: renovations. The bad news first: It is unlikely you will find a property that is truly in move-in condition. For example, in the U.S., prospective home sellers often renovate the bathrooms and the kitchens *before* putting their property on the market. This is rarely the case in France. I completely gutted my Marais apartment, leaving only the original windows and beams. At the very least, there will likely be small tweaks you will want to make before moving in: adding more outlets (the French for some reason don’t seem to need more than one or two outlets per room), painting, upgrading the hot water heater, etc. And the good news: the bank that gives you your mortgage will likely increase the loan to cover renovations if you still qualify for the total amount of the loan.

Once again, I urge you to have a chat with a mortgage specialist or with your bank *before* you start the search process so you know all your options.

French Mortgages— What You Need To Know

By Tahminae Madani of [France Home Finance](#)

If you are considering buying your apartment in Paris and financing, it makes sense to take a French mortgage rather than encumber a property in your home country with debt. Many people are surprised to learn that you don't need to be a French resident to obtain a French mortgage. Getting pre-approved to borrow is straightforward and rates are quite low ranging from 2.5 to 4%. To qualify, your mortgage broker will calculate ratios based on your regular income sources, loan payments and assets. Life insurance linked to the loan is required and it's often possible to subscribe to a group policy to have a better rate. Be sure to start early as French banks are notoriously slow moving!

Tahminae is a personal contact of mine and also a recommended Live and Invest Overseas expert. She can be contacted on Skype at: tahminae.fhf or by phone: +33 (0)1 44 88 59 44

If you do decide to undertake renovations, you will need to choose whether to manage the project yourself, hire an architect, and/or hire an interior designer. Expect the timeframe and the costs they quote to run over by at least 50%, maybe 100%! [AngloINFO France](#) is a great resource for everything renovations from outlining the considerations, offering English-speaking contacts to a guide to the lingo.

Renting

If you prefer to rent rather than buy, at least at first, expect to spend around €32-€35 per square meter per month (roughly US\$4 per square foot). In the 4th arrondissement, rentals range from about €25-€48 per square meter per month (averaging about €35) and €24-€43 per square meter per month (averaging about €32) in the 3rd arrondissement. To put that in perspective, a 50-square-meter apartment would run you on average €1,675 per month, or US\$2,268 per month for a 538-square-foot apartment.

Generally speaking, it is not always so easy to find an apartment in Paris, but once you are in, you are well protected. A standard unfurnished lease is for three years, renewable.

The landlord cannot increase the rent by more than the rate of inflation and you cannot be evicted unless the owner wishes to move back in (and even then, you cannot be evicted in the winter).

Because of these strong protective measures for renters, unfortunately you may run into some anti-foreigner and anti-non-salaried employee bias when looking to rent. Landlords and their rental agencies want to be sure you will be able to pay the rent. It's not uncommon for a landlord to ask for a guarantor.

Otherwise the provisions of a lease you will sign in Paris will be similar to lease terms in other major cities, with a few exceptions. First, it is the occupant, as of January 1, who pays the *taxe d'habitation* (one of the two property taxes), unless you are in a furnished 1-year-term rental, in which case the lease may provide that the owner pays the property tax. Second, it is generally the renter's responsibility to have an annual check-up of the hot water heater (*entretiens de la chauffe eau*) and to have the chimney/fireplace cleaned (*ramonage*), if you are lucky enough to have a working fireplace.



My Marais apartment before, during, and after renovations



A new address, a new life...

It's important to check the lease terms carefully—bring along a French speaker to be sure before you sign the lease! See "[Paris: Real Estate Agencies](#)" for a list companies that specialize in short term rentals.

Part-time Residence

This seems an appropriate place to discuss the possibility of part-time residence in the Marais, quite common among expats. It is not only common, but potentially feasible financially because the Marais is such a sought-after location for short-term vacation rentals. If you own your home and you are comfortable renting it out when you are away, you can recoup quite a chunk of your costs. Saint-Germain-des Prés is the only neighborhood to rival the Marais for popularity among tourists looking for a short-term rental. Before making this part of your plan, however, I urge you to look into the latest rules and regulations. Officially, rentals in Paris for a term of less than one year are not permitted; that being said, everyone does it. The city is in the process of reviewing the restrictions and determining the best policy going forward.

Health Care

Year after year, the World Health Organization ranks France #1 for best overall health care among its 191 member countries. Health care in France is good and it's cheap.

If you are in the French system (i.e. you are a tax paying French resident) and you have a *Carte Vitale*, prescription medicine is practically free. But even for those of us not covered by French health insurance, prescription medicines are usually relatively cheap, certainly compared to the U.S., due to stricter government regulation of drug pricing in France. On several occasions I have asked for a receipt to request reimbursement from my international health plan only to receive an invoice for not much more than the price of the international postage to mail my claim form.



Louis-Maurice Debelleye, Paris' Police Commissioner in the 1800s, lived here

At my last visit to the doctor (an appointment I had made only four hours in advance), I was still waiting for my French health insurance card to arrive in the mail (that can take months). So I paid out of pocket: an underwhelming €27 for the visit and a total of under €16 to fill all four prescriptions the doctor gave me. So even if you do not have insurance, the out-of-pocket expenses are far lower than in the United States, for example.

Living in Paris, you have the added benefit of a plethora of English-speaking doctors. And if you have the time to venture over to Neuilly-sur-Seine (a suburb just on the other side of the *périphérique*, easily accessible by public transportation), you can visit the American Hospital, where most of my American expat friends' children have been born. The American Hospital is much pricier than a visit to a French doctor (around €125 for a regular check-up), but it's an option for those who prefer U.S.-style care.

I invite you to read more about [healthcare options in France here](#).

Residency Restrictions & Taxes Considerations

Moving to any new country unfortunately entails a certain amount of bureaucracy when it comes to residency visas, work visas if you plan to work while overseas, and tax obligations. And when it comes to bureaucracy, no one does it better than the French! “[French Residency & Visas](#)” and “[French Taxes](#)” have details on these vital but not so glamorous topics.

Setting up in France...

...or, “The Bureaucratic Battle.” The French invented the word *bureaucratie* and there is often a good bit of red tape involved in any seemingly simple transaction of daily life in France. But once you figure out the system, you will see that despite the annoyances, the French system also has its advantages.



Come summer, many stores and cafés close for the long vacation

Opening A Bank Account

This should be the first thing you do when you step foot off the plane. You are no one in France until you have a *carte bleue*, a cross between a credit card and a debit card.

You will not be able to set up any of your utilities, buy a movie pass, or do much of anything in France before you have a bank account set up.

Call your bank in advance to set up an appointment for Day 1, and ask them what documents you will need to bring (but don't be surprised when they name a few more when you arrive that they hadn't told you about on the phone). If you are employed in France, it's best to ask your employer if he/she works with a particular bank and can write you a letter of introduction, attesting to your salary.

It is common to be faced with a property Catch 22: you cannot sign a lease until you have a bank account, but you cannot set up a bank account until you have an address in France. Again, call the bank before you leave for France and explain the situation. Ask what you will need to do so everything runs smoothly. I bank with BNP Paribas, which seems to work with foreigners fairly often, and I have generally had a good experience with them.



You may need to knock at the door of a few banks to find the right one

Be aware that most French banks (with the possible exception of Boursorama, an online bank only available to persons who already have a bank account in France) charge a lot of

hidden and not-so-hidden fees. If your language skills allow (or you have a Francophone friend willing to help out) do not be afraid to negotiate these fees down. Choose your bank carefully. A good bank representative can be much more helpful to the average non-millionaire in France than at most U.S. banks. But you need a good one, a responsive one. Ask friends for a recommendation, someone they trust. All the major banks have branches in the Marais, but for the one or two times per year you need to speak with your personal representative, I would set up your account wherever you find someone who comes recommended, even if it's a few neighborhoods away.

Phone/Internet/Cable

It may take some time to have the cable/Internet company set up your line, so get this process rolling right away. In the meantime, getting a cell phone is much easier and for as little as €55 per month you can sign up for a plan with unlimited minutes with free calling to 50+ countries, including to landlines and cell phones in the U.S. and Canada.

Paying Bills

While the use of personal checks is widespread in France, almost every recurring payment is done by *prélèvement automatique* (automatic debit from your account). You will often be asked for a RIB, which is effectively your account and routing number (including the IBAN and BIC/swift code). This automatic payment system saves hassle in the future, once it is set up, but it is another reason why you need a bank account before you can do very much in France.

Exchanging Money/Exchange Rate

The exchange rate has fluctuated between approximately US\$1.28 to the euro and US\$1.62 to the euro since I have lived here, and unfortunately it is not always possible to match your revenues to your expenditures. Certain international banks (HSBC, for example) offer money transfers from dollars to euros and vice versa, however, it may not be worth the fees of banking with an HSBC-type bank to make use of this service. I use WorldFirst to transfer dollars to euros and it saves me about US\$300-US\$400 per US\$10,000 or so of money transferred compared to the fees and rates Citibank was quoting me.

Credit Card Acceptance

Back to the importance of the *carte bleue*: French cards have a *puce* (literally a flea, but in this context a data chip). You generally enter a 4-digit code when paying by card, instead of signing the receipt. Most shops and higher-end or touristy restaurants take Amex, but most locations do not. Most restaurants and shops of any size will take MasterCard or Visa even without the *puce*. But you will run into situations from time to time (buying metro or RER tickets from the machine for example) where you need a card with a *puce*.

Driver's License

The rule is that you can drive and rent cars with most foreign licenses (even without an international driver's license)—certainly all EU licenses, any U.S. state license, and most developed nations' licenses—for up to one year. Once you have resided in France for one year (and finally gotten good at driving here), you are no longer allowed to use your U.S. license.

You must trade in your license for a French one or pass the French driving exam. License information for other non-EU nationalities is available on AngloINFO France.

EU licenses are exchangeable for French licenses, as well as licenses from 19 U.S. states. (The list of states changes quite regularly; Wisconsin, for example, was removed in March 2013. For the most up-to-date information check the French Embassy in Washington.) If you have a license from one of the other 33 states, you are out of luck. I have no idea why (except that it has something to do with reciprocity). I have no idea how this jives with what we learned in law school, that individual states cannot make treaties with foreign countries. Perhaps Senators from these lucky states have sons or daughters living in France who want to drive—that's my best guess!

If you have to take the French driver's exam, I wish you *bonne chance*! I finally took the plunge and it was *not* easy. But it's doable. I am not recommending anything here, but were you to switch license to one of the "reciprocal" states before moving to France, well...I also had no problem renting a car from time to time on my U.S. passport and New York license. The question is would insurance really cover you if you had an accident?

International Schools

Public schools in Paris are excellent, but the teaching style is very distinct from the interactive, cooperative learning-style teaching that influences modern-American teaching philosophy. Paris does offer a number of international and bilingual schooling options, including an American School and a British School. Most of the international schools tend to be in the western part of the city, where there is a large population of well-to-do international families with children. ParisAdvice.com offers a convenient list of the international school options in Paris.

Disabled Access

With its cobblestoned streets, narrow sidewalks, high curbs, and lack of ramps, Paris is certainly not the easiest city to get around for someone with a disability, and of course the historic Marais is probably amongst the most difficult neighborhoods to navigate, after the hilly and staircase-ridden Montmartre. That being said, the city has made great strides in recent years to modernize. Here are some helpful resources:

- The Convention and Visitors Bureau has a handy website in English that outlines the [public transportation options for persons with disabilities](#), as well as [short-term accommodation options](#).
- [Access in Paris](#) is a non-profit group that also has an English-language website with information on accommodations, transportation, visiting sites, and information on how to order their more comprehensive guidebook.
- [Accessible Travel Tips For Paris](#) by David Lebovitz
- General information from [Sage Traveling](#). They also offer a [wheelchair accessible tour of Jewish life and history in the Marais](#).

Restaurants can be a problem as well, if not for access to the dining area, then for access to the bathroom, which is often down in the basement. The Convention and Visitors Bureau's site lists [25 restaurants in Paris that are wheelchair accessible](#); unfortunately only one, Le Georges in the Centre Pompidou, is in the Marais. Of course other restaurants may be manageable, but perhaps not up to your home country's standards for handicapped accessibility.



It's historic but not easy to navigate

Finding an apartment in the Marais to buy or to rent would also be challenging, though not impossible, if wheelchair access is a requirement. Most buildings do not have elevators, and those that do have elevators may be too small to fit a wheelchair. But more and more buildings are putting in elevators, and of course *rez-de-chaussée* (ground floor) apartments are available.

Gay & Lesbian Living

Since the 1980s, the Marais has generally been considered *the* gay neighborhood in Paris. Acceptance is unlikely to be an issue throughout the Marais and generally speaking in Paris as a whole. A number of English-language websites recommend (particularly) gay- and lesbian-friendly venues throughout the city, and list upcoming events in the gay and lesbian communities.

Recent polls show France to be one of the most "gay-friendly" countries in the world, with 77% of those polled by Pew Research answering yes to the question, "Should society accept homosexuality?" Since November 1999, same-sex

couples have been allowed to enter into civil solidarity pacts (PACS), similar to a civil union in other jurisdictions.

The French polling company BVA found that a steady 58% of the French population supported same-sex marriage throughout the six months leading up to its legalization on May 18, 2013. Despite the legalization of same-sex marriage, the PACS regime is likely to remain popular; interestingly, 94% of these *pacsé* couples, as of 2012, were heterosexual couples who preferred this status to marriage.

Despite these advancements, the city has unfortunately seen certain isolated acts of violence against gays recently, and large protests following the legalization of gay marriage in May.



The history of the place towers over you

Bringing Fluffy and Fido

If you will be moving to France with your pet, the good news is there is no quarantine requirement. However, there are still a few hoops to jump through. First, all dogs and cats must

be identified with a microchip implanted by the veterinarian (or tattoo if applied before July 2011). Each pet must have a valid rabies certificate.

Before travel, you must obtain an official health certificate from a certified veterinarian. You must enter the EU within 10 days of the issuance of this certificate, and this certificate will allow you to travel within the EU for up to four months (or the expiration of the rabies certificate).

A European pet passport can also be obtained for travel between countries within the EU. This passport is, however, not sufficient for entry into the EU from a non-EU country.

There may also be additional requirements if you are traveling from a country other than Europe, the U.S. or Canada.

See the [U.S. Embassy's detailed explanation of pet travel requirements](#) for dogs, cats, and other friends as well, and more information on the EU pet passport on the [European Commission's site](#).

Inconveniences & Annoyances

Most expats, French from the *provinces* (outside the Paris area) and even many Parisians themselves would list “Parisians” as the number one annoyance living in Paris! I delved into that topic briefly above, so I will focus here on two less subjective drawbacks to living in the Marais.

Congestion

Aside from elevated prices, congestion is probably the number one complaint of Marais residents. Although the Marais is home to approximately one third of the population it sheltered at its peak in 1861, it is still considered to be one of Paris' most crowded neighborhoods. Numerous small parks dot the neighborhood, but there are no larger green or open spaces. Your best bet for escaping the crowds is to flee to the *quais* (the banks of the River Seine) or shoot out on the metro's Line 1 to the *Bois de Vincennes* (about 30 minutes on public transportation). The *bois* (forest), the largest of Paris' *intramuros* parks, is about three times the size of the Marais (or Central Park).

Hand-in-hand with congestion is noise. It is very important to check the noise levels at various times of day before

committing to a rental or property purchase. Some streets can be much quieter or much noisier than others. Whether your bedroom is on the *rue* (street) side or (*cour*) courtyard side can be a significant factor, as well as whether the windows have *double vitrage* (double-paned glass). If you fall in love with a rental that does not have double-paned glass, it may be worth trying to negotiate a window replacement before you move in.



*Before signing for a rental,
check these ancient shuttered windows do the job intended*

The high density of the Marais also means difficulties for parking. I've never heard of a Marais apartment that comes with parking, but that doesn't mean they don't exist—somewhere. Parking garages are easy to find, but monthly rates will run high. But who needs a car when you live in the Marais? I wouldn't want one.

Crime

As noted earlier, Dominique Strauss-Kahn is a resident of the Marais, with an apartment in the famous Place des Vosges. There's one small danger zone to avoid!

Crime is a consideration in any city, but crime rates in central Paris are relatively low and the crime that does occur tends to be most often in the order of stolen iPhones and wallets. Pickpockets are rampant.

Certain members of the Roma community unfortunately do their culture a disservice by perpetuating stereotypes, and each year they seem to have a new trick. Encounters with “ring people,” as I call them, are common. Someone will pick up a ring from the ground (which they have previously dropped) and approach you, asking if it's yours. I have fortunately not gotten far enough into the ritual to discover their exact *modus operandi*—whether they play on your sympathies to donate money or they just swipe your wallet when you are not looking. Either way, I suggest staying clear and not engaging in conversation. Recently, there have been groups of Roma with clipboards, pretending to be mute and to be gathering signatures, oftentimes by metro or train stations. Stay clear. As in any city, it's best not to show valuables: do not take out your wallet in public and certainly not your passport. Try to blend in as best as possible. For Americans, this means no white socks and tennis sneakers, “fanny packs,” or “outside voices.” Try not to pull out your map in a crowded public area.

The U.S. State Department's 2012 Crime Report for France is available [online](#). While the report is informative, don't let it scare you too much!

Top 5 Reasons to Move to the Marais

1. You'd be hard pressed to find more history, culture, and character per square meter anywhere else in the world
2. One of the most vibrant Anglophone expat communities in the world
3. Excellent and affordable health care
4. You can ditch the car
5. Everyone will want to come visit you

Top 5 Reasons the Marais May Not be the Place for You


1. It's not cheap (that's an understatement)
2. One person's “cozy” is another person's “crowded”
3. French bureaucracy
4. There are Parisians in Paris
5. Everyone will want to come visit you!

Alors? So Then?

I urge you to keep in mind, as you are evaluating the pros and cons of choosing the Marais as your next home, that this little powerhouse of a neighborhood is infinitely prototypical of Paris and of France and at the same time, not representative at all of the life you could have in other parts of the country. You would be hard-pressed to find a richer center of cultural offerings, historical significance, and expat community. Boredom is unheard of in the Marais. But the cost, compactness, and constant buzz of activity means that it is not the ideal home for everyone.



Boredom is unheard of in the Marais

If you love to be in the center of it all, if you love city life and are happy to spend more time out and about than home, it should be near the top of your list. If you prefer to spend much of your time *chez vous*, the budgetary and space sacrifices may tip the balance in favor of another destination to call home. 

Overseas Retirement Letter Online Resources

[A Video of the Marais](#)

[Marais: Monthly Budget](#)

[Marais: Shopping Cart](#)

[Paris: Real Estate Agents](#)

[France: Buying a Property](#)

[France: Taxes](#)

[France: Visas & Residency](#)

[France: Healthcare](#)

About The Author



A native of Massachusetts, Abby Gordon now splits her time between Paris' Marais district; Baden, Brittany; Boothbay Harbor, Maine, and Manhattan. When not at her day job, she maintains a blog on Paris (www.ParisWeekender.com) and manages the [rentals of her Marais apartment](#) and the [rentals of her home in Boothbay Harbor](#).

Ask The Author

January 7, Managing Editor Lucy Culpepper will be talking with Abby Gordon about the Marais during the live, monthly ORL teleconference. She'll be asking Abby questions, sent in by the Overseas Retirement Circle's ORL readers, about any subject to do with living in this part of Paris. This monthly call provides a great opportunity to really get under the skin of a place and have any thoughts or uncertainties answered, live, by an expert. However, this "Ask the Author" opportunity is only available to Overseas Retirement Circle members. If you'd like to send your questions in to Lucy and then join her on the call with Abby please take a look [here](#) for details on how to upgrade your ORL membership to become a member of the *Overseas Retirement Circle*.

Winter Sale Time Is Here

Another 12 months have flown past and it's once again time for festivities, holidays, and close-out sales. To mark the last issue of the year, and in keeping with the holiday spirit, we've gone out in search of five properties with significantly reduced price tags located in some of the world's favourite retirement locations.

Italy: Abruzzo



A 4-bed villa reduced from €340,000 to €175,000 (sold with furniture)

Old, brick and stone house renovated and transformed into a villa with 12 rooms set in a private park of 4,000 square meters. The villa has been uninhabited for 10 years so needs refurbishing and utility servicing. The villa is located five minutes' drive from the Rome-Pescara and 25 km from the closest airport. More information [here](#).

France: Boussac, Creuse



Immaculate 4-bed converted stone barn reduced from €262,150 to €235,400.

This converted barn has original features with clever updates including double sided wood burner, and ensuite master

room with terrace. The property has a cellar, stone outbuilding, enclosed paddock, and a duck pond. More information [here](#).

Panama: Amador Causeway



Luxury 3-Bed condo in "The Bridge" development on Panama City's Amador Causeway reduced from US\$529,000 to US\$499,000.

The property includes 3 bedrooms and 3.5 bathrooms, and a maid's bedroom and bathroom. Condo owners have full use of The Bridge's amenities including rooftop pool, gym, sauna, and social area. (Monthly fees are US\$350). The condo has a wraparound balcony with views to the Panama Canal and Bridge of the Americas. More information [here](#).

Mexico: Mineral de Pozos

A new-build, luxury 3-bed, 4-bath villa reduced from US\$370,000 to US\$299,000.

Described by the owner as "beyond description" and "meticulously maintained" this large villa includes a modern build set in the grounds of




landscaped gardens. All furnishings and appliances are included plus a one-year guarantee on all installed services. More information [here](#).

Thailand: Cha Am



Immaculate modern villa reduced from 8.5 million baht to 7.5 million baht.

This property is five minutes from Cha Am main beach, a popular destination with Thai families. The 5-bed, 3-bath house has a swimming pool and big garden in an open-countryside setting with mountain views. The fully fitted, European-style kitchen includes a gas hob, microwave, oven, white goods, hot water system, carport, store room, water pump, cable TV, and phone line. More information [here](#). 



Global News For The Retiree Abroad

Ireland Muddles Up Property Tax



Taoiseach Enda Kenny (the head of Ireland's government) says homeowners do not have to pay 2013 property tax until 2014, according to a report in the *Irish Independent*. The government had planned to give property-tax exemption to first-time property buyers who purchased property during 2013, and to homeowners who bought a new home from a builder or developer before 2016. However, poorly written legislation means that everyone who bought a home in 2013 is exempt from paying property tax for three years provided they live in the property—the only exception is investment buyers who do not live in their properties.

Where's The Best Place to Live?

According to the OECD, the best place to live is Australia. The OECD's *How's Life* survey measured people's responses to 11 "dimensions," which they consider are essential to a good life: income and wealth; jobs and earnings; housing conditions; health status; work-life balance; education and skills; social connections; civic

engagement and governance; environmental quality; personal security and subjective well-being.

Other top candidates are Canada, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. The OECD invites everyone to take part in their on-going interactive study which allows users to "express and share aspirations for a better life." Have a go [here](#).

Clean-Air Retirement

If clean and pure air is a requisite of your overseas retirement plans, a Gallup survey of 1,000 adults in 135 countries will be interesting reading for you. The survey comes hot on the heels of news that the World Health Organization (WHO) has officially declared that air pollution is carcinogenic. The Gallup survey found the top five countries where residents were most satisfied with air quality are Sri Lanka, Ireland, New Zealand, Nepal and Finland. The countries to avoid if air quality is a major issue are Hong Kong, Lebanon, Malta, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, according to the Gallup survey.

French Property Prices Show Little Movement

According to the Notaires-INSEE Index, in the second quarter of 2013 the market for second-hand properties had fallen by 1.1% over a year down 1.2% for apartments and down 1% for houses. Compared to the previous quarter, based on provisional data corrected for seasonal variations, prices changed very little falling

overall, with a fall of only -0.2% for apartments and an increase of 0.5% for houses. Each quarter the [Notaires de France](#) produce the Index and also provide a graphical snapshot of median sales prices of older houses and apartments and the price per square meter for new apartments.

Spanish Rental Prices Fall



Contrary to what you might expect in a country where house prices are falling and new builds are only just returning to the market, rental prices are falling too. It wouldn't be too much of a stretch of the imagination to expect there to be an increase in demand for rentals in Spain because fewer Spaniards can afford mortgages and there's little choice of new housing in some areas. However, according to Spain's National Institute of Statistics (INE) rental prices fell in October by 0.5% compared to October 2012, not a big fall but the seventh consecutive one.

Turkey's New Property Law Favors Foreigners

In October, the Turkish government introduced a new rule that speeds up the property buying/selling process.

Previously foreigners had to gain military approval for the purchase of a property, which could take up to three months. Now, if a property has already been granted approval after May 5, 2011 or if they are buying a new property and the owner already has approval a foreigner does not have to go through the process of obtaining military approval themselves.

UK to Introduce CGT for Foreigners

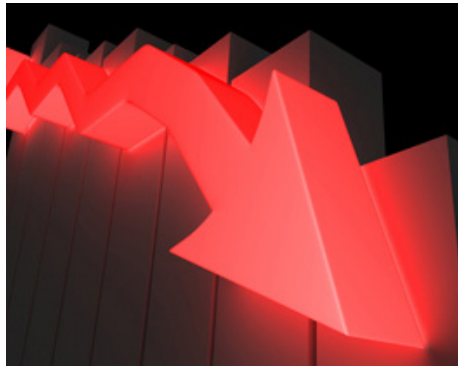


The UK's government has plans to introduce capital gains tax (CGT) on the sale of foreigner-owned property. The profit on sales of foreigner-owned property (and second homes owned by British expats) does not currently incur CGT. However, according to news reports the government plans to introduce CGT of 28%. The new rule is expected to be confirmed before Parliament breaks for Christmas.

Read more on the tax benefits of living in the UK in '[Vaduz-on-Thames—Why I hate living in a Tax Haven.](#)'

Greece Property Prices Fall Further

In the latest report from the Bank of Greece, apartment prices are estimated to have declined on average by 9.2% year-on-year in the third quarter of 2013.



Athens has been the worst hit by the euro crisis with property prices down 11% year-on-year in Q3 of 2013; in Thessaloniki prices were down 9.5%.

Perhaps not surprisingly, a recent Gallup survey of 135 countries found that Greece has had the highest increase in measurable "suffering" since the same survey was conducted in 2006.

Global Property Agent Opens in Bogota

Engel & Völkers, the global property agent, is now brokering prestigious residential property in Colombia.

Their Metropolitan Market Center (MMC) is located in the exclusive district of El Retiro, one of the most sought-after residential locations in the Colombian capital.

In addition to Bogotá, the focus of the MMC will be on the brokerage of high-end real estate in Colombian economic centers in major cities and popular second home markets such as Cartagena, Medellín, Barranquilla, and Cali.

"Colombia is one of the emerging economic powerhouses in South America, said José Miguel Echenique, Managing Director and Partner at E&V in Bogotá.

"The Colombian economy is benefiting considerably from a strong export industry resulting from its rich raw material reserves, as well as from its geographical location with access both to the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

The stable national economy, coupled with a low rate of inflation, is a very important factor for foreign investors. Such investments from abroad are also being helped along by efforts to improve the public infrastructure and combat crime in the long term.

Whilst there are interested investors based around the world, particularly strong buyer attention in Colombia is originating from Chile, Venezuela, and the USA."

Best Beach City Retirement



At Live and Invest Overseas, we regularly update you with the best spots for retirees overseas today. But what if you are looking for that pristine, upbeat beach-vibe in retirement? We've got the best cities [right here](#)—the spots encapsulating all there is to love about a beach community.

Doing Business in Latin America Improves

More than half of Latin American and Caribbean economies implemented reforms in the past year aimed at facilitating business activity by



local entrepreneurs, a new [World Bank Group](#) report finds. Panama, Guatemala, Jamaica, and Mexico reformed business regulations in at least three areas measured by the report.

Regionally, Colombia has improved business regulation the most since 2005—by undertaking 27 reforms. Chile retains the region's highest ranking on the ease of doing business. Guatemala, Peru, Costa Rica, and Mexico are among the top 50 economies making the most progress since 2005.

Guatemala was among the global top 10 improvers in business regulation in 2012/13. Guatemala created a one-stop shop for construction permitting, introduced a new system for filing and paying taxes, and launched an online platform allowing entrepreneurs to simultaneously register a new business with different government agencies.

Singapore tops the global ranking on the ease of doing business. Joining it on the list of the top 10 economies with the most business-friendly regulations are Hong Kong SAR, China; New Zealand; the United States; Denmark; Malaysia; the Republic of Korea; Georgia; Norway; and the United Kingdom.


Faster Immigration— Panama and U.S.

The Visitor—The visit of Joe Biden, Vice President of the United States, served as the perfect occasion to launch



Panama's new Global Entry program.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection office started this program five years ago. The idea is that passengers with “trusted” flier status leaving Panama for the U.S.A. can check customs and immigration at an automated kiosk in Tocumen Airport so that on arrival they avoid standing in line. Citizens of the United States and Panama can apply for this service.

Read more about this on [LINews](#). 

How To Get Rich Slowly

**This four-part strategy
is proven to build real wealth that lasts...**

Find out more HERE!


Coming Next Month... Phnom Penh, Cambodia

From the architectural and artistic triumph that is Angkor Wat to the unfathomable cruelty of the Khmer Rouge regime, Cambodia's history has always loomed large. But today, a new Cambodia is emerging and Phnom Penh—christened 'The Pearl of Asia' by the colonial French who laid its foundations—is the spearhead.

An inspiring cultural revival is underway as Cambodians rediscover their ancient culture; one which the Khmer Rouge sought to wipe out in a maniacal bid to drag the nation back to 'year zero'. The country's art, food, dance, religion, and music are again thriving—and the world is taking notice. Since 2004, visitor numbers are up 180%.

Phnom Penh, for its part, is being polished up—its revamped colonial buildings again vie for attention with breathtakingly ornate Khmer temples. The city's ambitious, unceasingly optimistic people have injected a new vibrancy that in the dark days looked to have been lost for good.



Throw in weather as warm as its locals, rapidly improving infrastructure, and an amazingly low cost of living and it's easy to see why many visitors are now choosing to call this place home. The story of Phnom Penh is still being written. In the first *Overseas Retirement Letter* of 2014, we'll tell you why you should consider becoming part of it. 

LIO events notice board

[Jan. 8-10, 2014, Belize City, Belize](#)
[Live and Invest in Belize](#)

[Jan. 29-31, 2014, Panama City, Panama](#)
[Live and Invest in Panama](#)

[April 14-16, 2014, Panama City, Panama](#)
[Global Property Summit](#)



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