



Living in the City of Romance on Valentines Day

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If there is one thing that I have learned from living in Paris it's that the city never loses its romantic appeal. It's a place full of romance, beauty and charm. It's a city that makes me want to fall in love over and over again, and when I'm there, I do just that. There is just something about the spirit of Paris; the architecture, the history, the Eiffel Tower...that no matter how many times I walk along the banks of the river Seine or look out across the stunning bird's eye view of the city from the peak of Mont Martre, I always feel as though I am falling in love for the first time; not only with my boyfriend who is usually standing beside me, but also with the city itself.

I will admit to not usually being very 'into' the whole Valentine's Day thing. Normally I go out of my way to stay indoors on the 14th of February, avoiding all restaurants where there is a strong possibility that I will be surrounded by smug couples getting cosy over a candlelit dinner. However this year my little frozen heart appears to have melted and I have loosened up on the romance factor, probably due to the fact that my boyfriend proposed to me last month and ever since, I've been feeling particularly loved up. Then again, it could just be the romance of Paris rubbing off on me. Either way, this year I am looking forward to Valentine's Day, and have even planned a romantic *journée* spent in the heart of the city with my fiancé. When you live in Paris, there's no excuse not to take advantage of everything it has to offer, *n'est ce pas?*

To those of you who have planned your own romantic break away to Paris, you won't regret it. And to those of you who haven't, why ever not? Paris is without a doubt the most romantic city in Europe and has so much to offer, whether it's a weekend break or a lengthier stay. It's a city full of history and culture, buzzing

with romance. It's a city that's alive day and night and you will be swept off your feet by the charm of the capital – even the language is sexy and will have you spellbound instantly, I guarantee you.

We've all seen the movies and sighed at the romantic scene as two lovers kiss passionately on *Le Pont Neuf* bridge overlooking the Seine, but how about French kissing *on* the Seine? I'm talking about taking a trip on a *bateau mouche* – or in plain English, a fly boat. Yes, that's right; take a boat trip along the river with your lover. It may not seem like the best idea in February with low temperatures and an open top boat, but I can assure you that when you're passing the Notre Dame Cathedral or taking in the delights of the stunning architecture along the way, cuddling up with your other half, you won't be thinking about the weather.

Of course, the very first time I realised that I was in love with this city was when I stood before the Eiffel Tower and looked up. The second time I felt this way was when I was on the Eiffel Tower and looked down. Don't be afraid to do all the clichéd activities; make sure you go to the Eiffel Tower, even if it seems like a bit of a stereotypical thing to do. Why miss out on the breathtaking views and romantic opportunities that can be had while up there just because you are afraid of being 'cheesy'?

But I think that my ultimate, most favourite romantic spot in Paris is still Monte Martre. The views from the peak of the hill, in front of the beautiful Sacre Coeur church, always has and always will leave me breathless, and not just because of the amount of stairs I had to climb to get there (don't worry there is a cable car too). If it's a nice day, my fiancé and I often take a stroll around the winding streets of Monte Martre, looking at the artists drawing portraits of tourists, and checking out the boutiques that line the narrow streets before buying a crêpe and eating it in front of the church, looking out across the entire city and wiping chocolate from each other's chins.

Another romantic item to add to your itinerary should be visiting the town just outside Paris, Versailles. Hop on a train and you will find yourself in the centre of Versailles in only fifteen minutes. Take a walk along the tree-lined boulevards hand in hand, take in your surroundings; the Italian style buildings, the chic locals, the boutiques and local markets held in *La Place du Marché* but make sure you end up at the Chateau de Versailles. The palace, famous for its splendour and breathtaking gardens, was the home of Louis XIV and his young wife, Marie Antoinette, and despite the number of times I have visited this heritage site (it's always the first place I take friends and family who have come to visit me here), I will never grow tired of the palace, or the immense grounds with it's remarkable fountains and mazes. Something about the place just glows with romance.

And finally, a word to any singletons out there. Just because Paris is famed for its romance and appeal to lovers, why let that stop you from taking a trip over with friends or even by yourself? This city caters for everyone and you never know, play your cards right and you may end up with a French man all of your own, just like me!

Helpful Websites

<http://www.bateaux-mouches.fr/>

<http://www.chateauversailles.fr/fr/>

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