

## On Your Marks

The Paris Olympics don't kick off until July 2024, but smart travelers should start making plans now.

By Lindsey Tramuta



IN LESS THAN A YEAR, millions of spectators will descend on the French capital for what is poised to be the event of the decade: the 2024 Summer Olympics and Paralympics. How big will these games be? They're so major that the final stage of the Tour de France will be moved, for the first time ever, from the Champs-Élysées all the way to Nice, on the Côte d'Azur.

Of course, the city is no stranger to massive crowds: last year, more than 44 million people visited Paris and the surrounding Île-de-France region, a figure about 10 percent shy of the city's pre-COVID numbers. Still, with what is sure to be heavy security and packed roads, trains, and bike lanes, navigating the arrondissements next summer will take some serious finesse.

If you're planning to attend, one challenge to tackle ASAP is accommodation. Rooms in many of the best hotels have already been snapped up by Olympic partners and other VIPs. Even mid-tier properties have seen their inventory dwindle: the funky 25Hours Hotel Paris Terminus Nord, for example, has been booked solid since early 2023 because it's directly across from the Gare du Nord, the train station that visitors, organizers, and the media will use to reach the Olympic and Paralympic Villages, just outside the city.

Many hotels do still have space—though often with minimum-stay requirements and eye-watering prices. Shopping around is easy with **Accor**—whose brands include **MGallery**, **Sofitel**, and **Swissôtel**—because the group has 410 hotels in the Paris metro area. **Airbnb**, which many travelers think of as a value option, may prove as costly



### LOCK IN THOSE TICKETS NOW

FOR THE FIRST time in Olympics history, tickets are being sold exclusively online, on a single website: **[tickets.paris2024.org](https://tickets.paris2024.org)**. After an initial lottery phase in early 2023, passes are now available to anyone; keep in mind that only six can be purchased at a time, up to a maximum of 30 per account. An official resale platform is set to launch in the spring.

Many events will be held in central Paris. The Place de la Concorde, for example, will host the first-ever

breakdancing event, along with other sports like skateboarding and three-on-three basketball, while beach volleyball will be played on the Champ de Mars, in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower. Numerous competitions will take place just outside the city: equestrian events, for example, will be held on the grounds of Versailles. All venues will be accessible by public transit.

The opening ceremony on July 26 will represent another first for the Olympics: the Parade of Nations

will be held outdoors rather than inside a stadium—and will sail down the Seine from the Pont d'Austerlitz, in the east, to the Trocadéro. While tickets will be required for prime viewing spots, watching from the esplanade along the river will be free to all. Meanwhile, numerous museums and institutions will host sports-related exhibitions, films, performances, workshops, and kids' programming throughout the summer. —L.T.

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as hotels next summer: a 2023 study by Deloitte forecasts an 85 percent spike in rates on the platform across greater Paris during the Olympics. It may pay to consider apartment-rental firms such as **Le Collectionist**, **HighStay**, **Onefinestay** (another Accor brand), and **Sonder**.

If you'd rather leave the logistics to someone else, the official hospitality partner for the Olympics is **On Location**, a sports and events company owned by Endeavor, the entertainment firm. On Location is offering an array of travel packages, including some that bundle not only event tickets and accommodations but also perks like VIP access to the opening ceremony. That kind of five-star experience doesn't come cheap: at press time, the most affordable option was a three-night package for \$19,865 per person.



## HOW TO DO THE EIFFEL TOWER IN STYLE

IT'S ON MANY VISITORS' MUST-SEE LISTS, but the Eiffel Tower is often viewed as a victim of its own popularity. "We get 6.2 million visitors a year," notes Patrick Branco Ruivo, the managing director of the iconic attraction. His advice for beating the lines? First, try to book tickets in advance; they go on sale 60 days out. Second, consider a splurge to make your visit stress-free. A newly launched "Grand Tour" will whisk you and up to five other guests past every line, with a private guide, right to the top. The experience also includes, naturally, a champagne toast, plus a behind-the-scenes look at the tower's hydraulic lift system. "It's the original machinery invented by Eiffel," Branco Ruivo says, admiringly. *Grand tour from \$2,334 for up to six people.* —Paul Brady



## Add This to Your Preflight Checklist

U.S. CITIZENS WILL likely need a new digital travel authorization before flying to Europe next year. The European Union is on track to activate a new database, formally known as the **European Travel Information & Authorisation System**, or ETIAS, that's designed to prescreen arrivals by cross-checking their biographical details with Interpol and other agencies.

Should it launch as scheduled in 2024, travelers will need to submit their personal information online, as well as their travel plans, and pay a fee of \$8 before arriving in any of 30 European countries. (All 27 members of the Schengen Area, plus Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Romania, are participating.) Applications will be processed "within minutes," according to the EU, and approvals, which will be electronically tied to travelers' passports, will be good for up to three years or the expiration of their IDs, whichever is sooner.

The implementation of ETIAS has been rumored for years, but momentum has been building for 2024, says Paul Tumpowsky, the founder and CEO of the travel agency Skylark and a member of T+L's Travel Advisory Board. "They'll try to get it 'turned on' before the Olympics," he predicts. "I imagine the new system will be super smooth—at least compared to the old days of dropping off your passport for a physical visa."

Other industry watchers agree. "Travelers are now more accustomed to filling out various forms online, such as COVID health attestations," observes Henry Harteveltdt, the president of Atmosphere Research Group, a consultancy. "Since an ETIAS 'pass' will be valid for years, it should be relatively convenient." More information on the rollout can be found at [travel-europe.europa.eu](https://travel-europe.europa.eu). —P.B.



## ANOTHER MAJOR MILESTONE

Next June marks the 80th anniversary of the invasion of Normandy, and the region just west of Paris will play host to cultural events to honor those who liberated Europe. For its part, **Viking** will offer a new 12-day itinerary (from \$6,599 per person) that starts with visits to World War II sites in London before continuing to Paris.

From there, guests travel by river ship to numerous D-Day landmarks, including Omaha and Utah beaches. The **National WWII Museum** has arranged an 11-day tour (from \$14,999 per person) aboard the *Seabourn Ovation* that visits important sites, including the Airborne Museum, the Mémorial de Caen, and the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial.

Those with less time should consider **Context Travel's** private one-day tour (from \$2,440 for two people) that begins in Bayeux, the first major city recaptured by the Allies and, for a brief time in 1944, the capital of France. —L.T.