

What to do on the Canal Saint-Martin in Paris? A green setting
in the heart of the capital!



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By Floriane

Wondering **what to see and do** on the Canal Saint-Martin in Paris? You've come to the right place!

This iconic location, popular with Parisians and tourists alike, is a perfect blend of tranquility and liveliness. It's a place we frequented regularly when we lived in Paris before our [backpacking trip around the world](#).

Whether you're looking for a leisurely stroll, a cruise or good places to eat and drink, follow us for a total immersion in the heart of this emblematic district.

Presentation of the Canal Saint-Martin in Paris

The Canal Saint-Martin is a place steeped in history. Built in the early 19th century to supply Paris with drinking water, it stretches over 4 kilometers and crosses the

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capital's 10th and 11th arrondissements. It links the Port de l'Arsenal (in Bastide, where we used to live) to the Bassin de la Villette. Part of the canal runs underground.

This picturesque canal, lined with century-old plane trees, offers a breath of fresh air in the heart of the city. Its charm lies in its locks, swing bridges and cobbled quays, which create a romantic and peaceful atmosphere. It's an ideal place to stroll, relax and soak up Parisian life.

Photo by Carl Campbell

Practical tips for your visit to the Canal Saint-Martin

Where is the canal?

How to get there?

The canal is easily accessible by metro, with several stations nearby, including **République, Gare de l'est, Jaures, Jacques Bonsergent....** If you prefer

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walking, it's also a pleasant stroll from the center of Paris.

→Si If you arrive in Paris with luggage, you can drop it off at one of the Bounce points [near Gare de l'Est](#). This solution lets you visit the Canal Saint-Martin unencumbered by your belongings.

Your belongings will be kept safe, while you enjoy your day at leisure. The lockers are practical and secure, allowing you to move around freely and make the most of your visit. We advise you to book online so that you can easily select the venue that suits you best.

Things to do at Canal Saint-Martin

An unusual walk along the Canal Saint-Martin

This is the walk to take in Paris. We recommend you start your exploration at the Passerelle des Douanes in Paris's 11th arrondissement, and continue to the Bassin de la Villette in the 19th arrondissement (approx. 2 km).

From the very first steps, you'll be charmed by the peaceful atmosphere along the quays. The plane trees provide a green setting, and the gentle lapping of the water adds a note of serenity.

Following the canal, you'll come across the **famous Canal Saint-Martin locks**. There are 9 in all. With their ingenious mechanisms, these structures enable boats to overcome differences in level.

Watching the ballet of the locks is a mesmerizing spectacle, especially for fans of old machinery and civil engineering. Each lock opens and closes smoothly, allowing the boats to pass from one level to the next in a well-oiled choreography.

Continue your stroll and discover the swing bridges. These bridges are true engineering gems, pivoting to allow boats to pass.

Crossing these bridges, you can admire **magnificent views of the canal and the surrounding area**.

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A walk along the Canal Saint-Martin is also an opportunity to discover the street art that can be seen on the façades.

Cruise on the Canal Saint-Martin

If you love water, why not take a canal cruise? As you know, we love exploring cities from the water, as on our trip to the [fjords around Bergen](#).

Several companies offer boat trips, allowing you to discover the canal and its surroundings from a whole new angle. Sailing on calm waters, you'll have the chance to pass under bridges, through locks, and see Paris in a totally different way. In our opinion, this is the cruise to take on your Paris vacation!

→ Nous recommends this cruise on the Seine from the Parc de la Villette, a unique experience that lets you discover Paris from a different angle. The company operating the cruise, Paris Canal, has an excellent reputation.

This 2.5-hour cruise starts at the Parc de la Villette and ends at the Musée d'Orsay, passing iconic sites such as the locks of the Canal Saint-Martin, the Bassin de la Villette, and the Paris Marina at Bastille. (*price €23 per adult*)

[Information and booking for the Seine cruise here](#)

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The ideal spot for a picnic

For those who prefer to keep their feet on the ground, a **picnic by the water** is an excellent option. The canal banks are perfect for spreading out a blanket and enjoying an outdoor picnic.

Bring your own food and enjoy the relaxing surroundings. It's one of Parisians' favorite activities. We spent a lot of time with friends on the banks of the Canal Saint-Martin!

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Photo by Carl Campbell

The best restaurants and bars

The Canal Saint-Martin is surrounded by numerous **cafés, bistros and restaurants** to delight your taste buds. For lunch or dinner overlooking the water, settle into one of the establishments located directly on the quays.

- If you're looking for a Sunday brunch spot, **Comptoir Général** is a must. With its cosy atmosphere and delicious pastries, it's the perfect place to start the day.
- For lunch or dinner, the **Gros Bao Paris** restaurant is an excellent option. Renowned for its inventive cuisine, this little establishment is a real hidden gem. Enjoy Asian dishes prepared with fresh ingredients, in a warm and friendly atmosphere.
- If you prefer a more relaxed setting, **Chez Prune** is a must. This bar-restaurant serves exotic cocktails and tasty cuisine. It's the ideal place for an evening with friends or lovers, with a breathtaking view over the canal.

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Our opinion of the Canal Saint-Martin district

The Canal Saint-Martin is well worth a visit, with its picturesque locks and tree-lined quays. This district offers an authentic glimpse of local Parisian life, far from the tourist hustle and bustle. We think it's the perfect place for a picnic in Paris!

We hope this article will help you plan your visit and take full advantage of all the Canal Saint-Martin has to offer. And who knows, maybe, like us, you'll fall under the spell of the unique charm of this corner of Paris.

Feel free to leave us a **quick note** or **5 stars** below, ask any questions you may have, below or on [Instagram](#) we'll get back to you with great pleasure.

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