

Five Star Kids

Child-Friendly Paris: Family Fun in the French Capital

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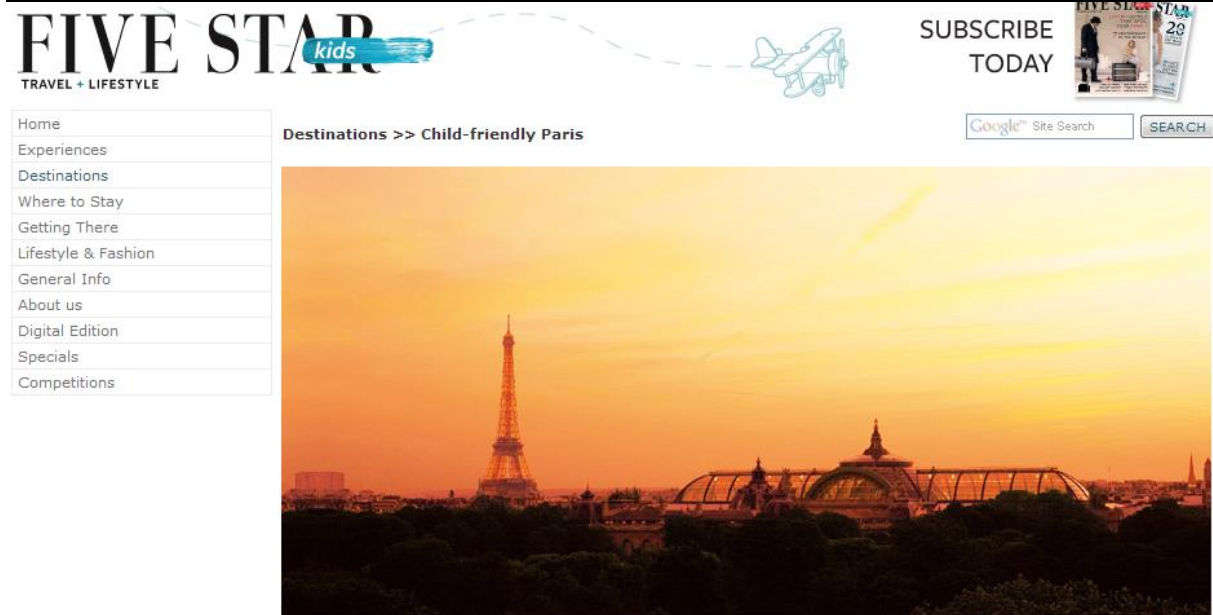
<http://www.holidayswithkids.com.au/FSK/destinations/ChildfriendlyParis>

Residence Nell

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CHILD-FRIENDLY PARIS: FAMILY FUN IN THE FRENCH CAPITAL

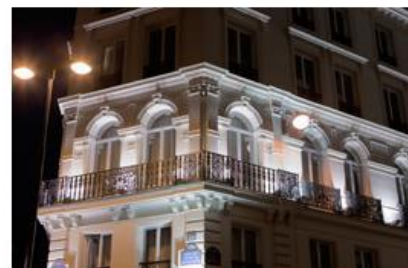
WORDS first appeared on the Smith & Family Blog

Ah, Mr & Mrs Smith love Paris – but is as much fun with your kids in tow? Travel journalist, parent, family-travel blogger and former Paris resident Rhonda Carrier says an emphatic ‘oui!’ If you book an apartment-style stay such as *Résidence Nell*, you’ll have freedom to relax and roam as you wish. Here, Rhonda shares her tried-and-tested child-friendly Paris tips in the first of a series of savvy-parent guest posts...

One of my favourite things about being a family travel writer is getting the chance to rediscover some of my favourite places from a wholly new angle. I lived in Paris for a year and stayed there countless times before even knowing about the eccentric ‘Dodo Manège’, a carousel featuring extinct and endangered species in the Jardin des Plantes, for instance, and without once visiting the quirky retro funfair of the Jardin d’Acclimatation in the Bois de Boulogne. I may no longer get much chance to sample the latest hip restaurants and bars when I’m exploring with my kids, but I have lots of fun tracking down great family-friendly places to eat – whether we’re on or off the tourist trail. The following are some of my favourite ‘finds’.

THE EIFFEL TOWER

It doesn’t matter how often we go to Paris, we always have to go to the top of the Eiffel Tower. Happily, you can now book ahead, meaning no more queuing for hours on end. The Tower itself has a funky, child-friendly first-floor café with brightly hued Perspex chairs and tempting sandwiches and pastries, but my boys – ardent



Main image: Landscape view over Paris
Above: Residence Nell exterior and interior

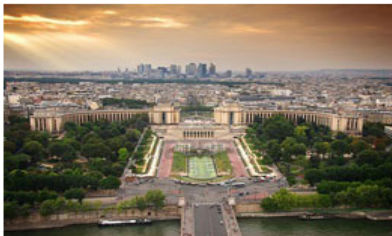
fans of 'Ratatouille', the movie about a rat who dreams of becoming a famous chef in Paris – like nothing better than a French feast at the Café du Commerce. This old-school bistro a few blocks west of the Tower is always packed with locals tucking into classic Gallic fare such as eggs mayonnaise, leek vinaigrette, wild Burgundy snails, grilled pigs' ears and excellent steaks. There's a good kids' menu for tiddlers. /P>

Café du Commerce Rue du Commerce, Paris 75015 (+33 (0)1 45 75 03 27)

LE JARDIN DES PLANTES

We never tire of visiting France's main botanical garden with its mini-zoo, quirky carousel of extinct animals, maze and natural history museums (no less than four). But serendipity has it that when we do need to refuel, the Jardin is just a few steps away from the Grande Mosquée de Paris with its lovely cedar-panelled restaurant. Here, ensconced on benches or cushions, you can partake of everything from tagines, couscous and grills to Middle Eastern pastries and ice cream – don't miss the Oriental Bowl with its dreamy mix of flavours (mint tea, honey, nougat and pine kernel). There's also a courtyard tea-room for pastries, mint tea and coffee – plus, strictly for parents, a luscious hamman.

Grande Mosquée de Paris Rue Saint-Hilaire 75005, (+33 (0)1 43 31 38 20 39)



BOIS DE BOULOGNE

The northern end of this wooded expanse more than twice the size of New York's Central Park is the place to find the Jardin d'Acclimatation with its enchanted-river ride, fairground attractions, play equipment, vast paddling pool with mist machines, mini-zoo and farm animals, and kids' museum and puppet theatre. Whenever we're here I delight in reminding the kids that the Jardin, which started life as a royal menagerie under Napoléon III, once served as a human zoo exhibiting African bushmen and other ethnological 'curiosities'! Of the snack kiosks and restaurants on-site, our favourite is La Crêperie de la Petite Ferme – a kitsch faux Breton

cottage where you can watch the farm animals as you munch delicious savoury and sweet pancakes.

La Crêperie de la Petite Ferme Jardin d'acclimatation, Paris 75116 (+33 (0)1 45 02 11 61)



JARDIN DU LUXEMBOURG

With its toy boating lake, pony-rides and superb playground, the Luxembourg Gardens are the classic place for a Sunday stroll to work up an appetite for a big family lunch on the Boulevard du Montparnasse, with our favourite venue being the legendary La Coupole. The fact that this art deco gem is so famous doesn't stop it from being excellent – or from taking pride in offering kids the same standard of food as their parents, in a bid 'to develop their palates'! We especially love the year-round 'terrace menu', featuring oysters, club sandwiches, lobster salad with French beans and fresh mango, and Guanaja chocolate cake with ice cream.

La Coupole 102 Boulevard du Montparnasse, Paris 75014 (+33 (0)1 43 20 14 20)

PARC DE LA VILLETTE

Another site with heaps of different things to do, Paris' biggest green space – once home to the city abattoirs – comprises the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, a museum of science and technology including kids' discovery spaces, a planetarium, and IMAX and moving cinemas, plus the Cité de la Musique, a concert space and museum of musical instruments, hosting family shows and events. On-site events include contemporary circus and cabaret, and there are themed gardens, sound installations and play areas. But we like to branch out from the La Villette's own eateries in favour of Café Antipode a few minutes' walk away. Part of a houseboat hosting kids' theatre and puppetry in the daytime and grown-up plays and concerts in the evening, it offers Fair Trade, artisanal fare including soups, open sandwiches, and charcuterie and cheese platters.

Café Antipode Opposite 55 Quai de la Seine, Paris 75019 (+33 (0)1 42 03 39 07)

From above:
Sunset view of Paris from the top of the Eiffel Tower
The beautiful Jardin du Luxembourg