

Discover kid-friendly fun in the City of Light

Mix sightseeing with plenty of food and playtime

MHAIRRI WOODHALL

Although considered to be one of the most romantic cities in the world, Paris is surprisingly spectacular for families.

The trick of course is to build fun flex activities into your itinerary.

Plan for one major attraction per day and spend the rest of your time exploring the city's many outdoor gardens and enticing eateries.

From must-see sights to mouth-watering delights, here are the top child-friendly attractions in the City of Light.

SIMPLIFY SIGHTSEEING

There are countless museums and world-famous attractions in Paris, and admission costs add up quickly.

Purchasing a two-, three-, four- or six-day Paris Pass is a great way to help plan your itinerary in advance and enjoy significant savings.

The pass includes an extensive guidebook, hop-on, hop-off bus tour, a Metro card good for unlimited travel throughout Paris, a Bateaux Parisiens River Cruise, entry to more than 60 museums and attractions including Palace of Versailles, Montparnasse Tower, Paris Opera House, Pantheon and Arc de Triomphe, as well as fast-track privileges to Louvre Museum, Musee d'Orsay, Centre Pompidou and the Grevin Wax Museum.

Prices start at 130 euros for adults and 40 euros for children.

Our top choices for families using the Paris Pass include Choco-Story for its deliciously informative facts about the history and cultural significance of chocolate, and the National Museum of Natural History, which houses a plethora of skeletons spanning from prehistoric times to present day.

EDIBLE ATTRACTIONS

Food is the key to keeping kids engaged and energized on long touring days, and the choices are endless in this culinary capital.

One of my favourite spots for a quick and inexpensive meal is the Brittany-style creperie Gigi in the trendy Upper Marais (3rd) district.

The tiny eatery is popular, so plan to visit outside of peak dining times to avoid a long wait. Go for a gluten-free buckwheat savoury galette, like the truffle ham and



The Eiffel Tower is a must-see landmark in Paris, as is the historic Pantheon in the Latin Quarter. PHOTOS: CURT WOODHALL



shiitake, then finish with a sinfully sweet caramel crepe.

For macarons, visit one of award-winning pastry chef Pierre Hermé's boutiques.

Two must-try creations include the pretty in pink Ispahan — a rose, lychee and raspberry signature — and the chocolate and passion fruit flavoured Mogador.

Another decadent draw are the handmade confections at La Chocolaterie de Jacques Genin. The fresh fruit-flavoured caramels and jellies are what dreams are made of. However, at almost one euro per piece, it's best to save these tantalizing tidbits for a special treat.

PLAYGROUNDS

Burn off the sugar rush at a Paris park.

You'll find four playgrounds, as well as an antique carousel, in the Champ des Mars gardens surrounding the Eiffel Tower.

Pick up provisions from a Parisian boulangerie and enjoy an al fresco lunch with an iconic view.

Wander the spectacular gardens at the Palais du Luxembourg, in the heart of picture perfect Saint-Germain-des-Prés. The kids will love discovering the 100-plus monuments and statues of saints, royalty and mythical creatures, enclosed playground, toy sailboat rentals and the Théâtre des Marionnettes (puppet theatre). You'll also find concessions and outdoor cafés throughout the palace grounds.

Another playground we visited, due to its proximity to our hotel in the 10th arrondissement, is the



Be sure to pick up some macarons from world-famous chef Pierre Hermé.

Square de Temple Elie Wiesel. This small city park, frequented primarily by locals, features a small lake, table tennis, children's playground and sandpit.

If you visit on a weekend, you'll likely be treated to live music in the outdoor gazebo.

SUMPTUOUS SPLURGE

While on vacation, my husband and I always plan a date night, and The Tour Guy's Super Expensive Paris Food Tour is the perfect excuse to leave the kids with a hotel sitter. Our opulent eating extravaganza was led by a local champagne producer whose passion for food was only surpassed by his immense knowledge of Paris's rich culinary history.

We began the evening with clas-

sic cocktails and creamy French cheeses at L'Hotel, a luxury boutique property in the Saint Germain quarter, where Oscar Wilde resided during his final years.

Champagne and a blind caviar tasting followed at one of the city's top establishments, Boutary.

For the main course, we dined on duck and green olives at the bustling classic French bistro Allard, which is owned by Michelin star chef Alain Ducasse.

Soufflé and champagne at Le Récamier, a Paris hallmark favoured by the Obamas, completed our lavish walking tour.

If the hefty 295 euro price tag is beyond your budget, or you want to make it a family affair, The Tour Guy's Le Marais Paris Food Tour for 100 euros (with reduced prices

for children) is an excellent alternative.

STAY CENTRAL

Booking a hotel in Paris may feel a little daunting, especially if it's your first visit to the city.

We stayed at the Renaissance Paris Republique.

Renaissance, which opened in 2016, is the first five-star hotel of the 10th arrondissement and is within walking distance of the famous Opera district and Marais area's many shops and restaurants.

Families will appreciate the larger (by Paris standards) suites and easy access to the metro station at Place de la Republique.

Another huge win for the property is its ever-helpful concierge services.

ARRIVE RESTED

Westjet's new Dreamliner Calgary to Paris route is heavenly — especially if you splurge on premium economy. We utilized a companion fare voucher to help bring down the cost.

Having travelled in the premium cabin with other airlines, I was beyond impressed with the Dreamliner's additional legroom, elevated footrest and wider seat with lower recline, as well as the top-notch inflight service.

The WestJet flight attendants went above and beyond to create an exceptional experience for all passengers.

As such, we arrived rested and ready to explore.

Visit arrivalstravel.com to follow Mhairri's family adventures.

Swiss museum keeps Chaplin's legacy alive

New generation of fans making the trek to visit silent film star's country estate

VALERIE FORTNEY

CORSIER-SUR-VEVEY, SWITZERLAND In a quiet town in southwest Switzerland, the local cemetery is tucked away behind a school and accessible by the narrowest of back streets. Still, back in 1978, a criminal duo found it, and exhumed the body of its most famous resident: Sir Charles Chaplin.

Better known as Charlie, the legendary comic actor-filmmaker-author-composer, who died in 1977 at age 88, would never have wanted his widow to pay the demanded ransom equivalent to \$800,000. So Oona, who married Chaplin when she was just 18 and he was a thrice divorced 54-year-old, refused. Five weeks later, the local police arrested two men and were led to Chaplin's body in a cornfield not far from the home where he and Oona raised their eight children.

Today, Chaplin lies in eternal rest next to his wife, who died in 1991 at age 66, their tombstones surrounded by flowers and well-tended topiary. More than four decades since the outrageous body snatching incident, a new generation of visitors are making the trek to pay their respects to the international entertainment icon.

Much of that has to do with the education they receive about Chaplin and his legacy just a half-hour's stroll away, at a 14-hectare site that includes the home where

he and Oona spent a happy quarter-century together.

Chaplin's World (chaplinsworld.com), on the grounds of his country estate above the village of Vevey in Switzerland's Vaud region, tells the story of the man once known as The King of the Silent Screen.

Only two years after its grand opening in 2016, the museum received the title of "best European museum" by the European Museum Academy.

Chaplin's World is a touching, loving look at a legend's professional and personal achievements.

Upon entering the stately home surrounded by lush grounds, relatively modest by modern day celebrity standards, it's clear to see why experts and visitors alike are raving about this homage to the 20th century's first entertainment superstar. In the front foyer, an eerily real, life-size wax version of the diminutive Chaplin greets his guests with a wide smile, his body



Charlie Chaplin, who died in 1977 at 88, lies in eternal rest next to his wife Oona, their tombstones surrounded by flowers and well-tended topiary. VALERIE FORTNEY

in the kind of frenetic, exuberant pose so familiar to his fans.

Along with equally uncanny wax figures of his wife Oona and Chaplin's friends Sir Winston Churchill and Albert Einstein in various rooms, the tastefully decorated home is filled with family photos, videos of Chaplin's performances and newsreels, as well as walls detailing the important timelines of his life.

The museum, which was years in the making, doesn't shirk from the more controversial side of the man who first stepped onto a stage as a separately poor five-year-old, and soon became one of the nascent film industry's first millionaires. Along with his penchant for mostly

underage, teenage brides — Nobel Prize-winning playwright Eugene O'Neill never spoke again to his daughter Oona after she married Chaplin — the star also got on the bad side of American authorities, who accused the self-described "peace-monger" of being a communist and of "moral turpitude."

Barred from returning to the U.S., he and Oona in 1953 chose to settle in southwest Switzerland on the shores of Lake Geneva. Those later years were, for the most part, the happiest of his life, as he played proud papa to his large brood and received a standing ovation in 1972 at the Academy Awards, where he was welcomed back to the U.S. with an Academy Honorary Award.

Other lifetime achievement award recognitions followed, and in 1975, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth, and died two years later as Sir Charles Chaplin.

Thanks to home videos showing a blissful father skipping playfully on his estate with his young children, performing his impish physical comedy at the dinner table and embracing his wife, Chaplin's World — which also includes a studio-style facility that brings his talent to life for a new generation — is a touching, loving look at a legend's professional and personal achievements, a man who lies in peace not far from the domestic Swiss sanctuary where he found peace and happiness.