

## Paris Smarts

A word about how to *Cope in Paris*

[speaking\\_french](#)  
[navigate\\_paris](#)  
[paris\\_metro\\_skills](#)  
[restaurant\\_proficiency](#)  
[paris\\_politeness](#)  
[street\\_smarts](#)  
[don\\_t\\_look\\_like\\_a\\_tourist](#)  
[bad\\_guys\\_in\\_paris](#)

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## Respect

Borrowed<sup>1)</sup>

Parisians have a reputation for being egocentric, rude and arrogant. While this is often only an inaccurate stereotype, the best way to get along in Paris still is to be on your best behavior, acting like someone who is “bien élevé” (well brought up). It will make getting about considerably easier.

Parisians' abrupt exteriors will rapidly evaporate if you display some basic courtesies. A simple “Bonjour, Madame” when entering a shop, for example, or “Excusez-moi” when trying to get someone's attention, are very important; say “Pardon” or better “je suis désolé” if you bump into someone accidentally or make other mistakes. If you speak French or are using a phrasebook remember to always use the *vous* form when addressing someone you don't know; this may transform the surliest shop assistant into a smiling helper or the grumpiest inhabitant to a helpful citizen. Courtesy is extremely important in France (where the worst insult is to call someone “mal élevé”, or “badly brought up”).

If you only learn one long phrase in French a good one would be “Excusez-moi de vous déranger, monsieur/madame, auriez-vous la gentillesse de m'aider?” (pardon me for bothering you, sir/madam, would you have the kindness to help me?) - this level of extreme politeness is about the closest one can come to a magic wand for unlocking Parisian hospitality. If you know some French, try it! But remember, too, that Parisians have places to go and things to do, so if they have no time and don't answer you, don't take it personally. Many Parisians, given time, will go out of their way to help, especially if you make an effort to speak their language and act polite to them.

Most foreigners tend to ignore two basic rules of courtesy in metro and train transport in Paris. If the carriage is full and you're sitting on a folding seat, you should consider standing up. If you stand next to the door, you are expected to get down to the platform at a stop so that people inside can find their way out. Once they have got out, you can go back. However, don't always expect that others will do the same for you and, if the train is full, get ready to get down with enough time in advance. In a corridor, when pushing a door, you are expected to hold it for the next person, so that it won't close abruptly. This rule is strictly observed in the metro, and quite commonly everywhere else.

In addition, if you are traveling to or from the airport or train station and have luggage with you, make

certain that you are not blocking the aisles in the train by leaving your bags on the floor. The RER B (which links both Orly and Charles de Gaulle airports to the city) has luggage racks above the seats (on the newer trains, there are no such racks above the seats, but racks dedicated to luggage in between some seats); it is best to use them so you do not block the path of a local who is getting off the train before the airport stop. On the métro and especially in the RER, don't take up extra seats with your luggage. There are luggage racks and spaces between the seats.

There are hefty fines for littering in Paris, especially with dog droppings (often you'll find free plastic bags dispensers around parks or playgrounds).

## How to Say 'Cheers' with a Drink

Quite often groups say 'Cheers' when toasting with a drink. How is it done in Paris?<sup>2)</sup>

### What to say

1. Santé! – Good health! Santé! or Good health! is probably the most common way to say cheers in French and the most popular. If you can only remember one, this would be the one to remember. You can also say:

à votre santé! – to your health!

à la santé de tous! – to the health of all

1. Tchîn-tchîn! – Clink-clink Tchîn-tchîn comes from the Chinese “qing-qing”. The original saying could mean

please please”, but these days most French people would just assume that it is about making the sound of two glasses clinking.

1. À la tienne! – To yours! (informal) If you are toasting a particular person for a reason, eg. gotten engaged, gotten a new job, or having a baby, you might say “à la tienne!” It literally means “to yours” as a short way to say “best wishes to you, good health, all the best, etc.”
4. À la votre! – To you! (formal or a group) “À la votre!” is the same as “à la tienne”, but while “tienne” refers to one person who you are rather close to, “votre” is for someone who you may be on more formal terms with, such as a co-worker or employer. It could also refer to a group of people, as “votre” is also used when there is more than one person being referred to.
5. On trinque! – Let's cheers! The French verb trinquer literally means to clink. On trinque means “let's cheers!” and clink your cup.
6. Cul Sec! – Bottoms up! Saying “cul sec” in French literally translates to “a\$\$ dry” and means you should down your drink in one gulp. This is basically the equivalent of the English phrase “chug!” or “bottoms up!”. This is used for shots of alcohol or beer, usually at a bar or a really raucous beer party. It isn't the most elegant of French sayings in all fairness, I couldn't leave it off the list!
7. In other languages Being in Europe, it is rather common in France to hear “cheers” being said in other languages than French. Some other expressions to say cheers in the language of a neighboring country are: Prost! – German Salud! – Spanish Salute! – Italian
8. Adding your own interpretation And finally, you can also add your own version to your toast, by saying “à + phrase”. This is usually used if you are at a gathering and wish to make a toast to a life event or other significant occasion. You can

toast life, love, a person, whatever you want as follows À l'amour! – to love! À la vie! – to life! À tes beaux yeux! – to your beautiful eyes! À Sebastien! – to Sebastien! Aux jeunes mariés! – to the young newlyweds! Now, just saying cheers in French is not enough, there is a whole host of etiquette that goes along with the clinking of glasses as well.

1)

Wiki Voyage Paris

2)

<https://snippetsofparis.com/say-cheers-in-french/>|How to Say Cheers in Paris

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