

Newsletter 2: Sciences Po fall 2014 and 14-15 year-long students



Bonjour, fall and year-long Sciences Po students!

Here's another update from your future city, as part of our welcome orientation to your upcoming study abroad experience with UC Paris and Sciences Po.

NOTES ON LIVING EXPENSES

Our past experience indicates that many students on the Sciences Po program underestimate the cost of living in Paris. Paris *can* be an extremely expensive city. There is a useful word in French, though, that doesn't have a direct translation into English: *débrouillardise*. The word refers to the crafty capacity for resourcefulness, for getting by and even doing well in somewhat adverse conditions. The French can be very good at getting by with little. This newsletter will try to give you an initial sense of how to cultivate your own *débrouillardise*.

Recently, exchange rates have fluctuated greatly for the American dollar. As we write this newsletter in mid-June, the Euro (€) costs about \$1.35. Given the current economic instability, this exchange rate will almost certainly continue to fluctuate, we hope in your favor. In particular if you are planning on traveling, you should expect to spend more money in Paris than you would in a similar period on your home UC campus.

We would say that living on a limited budget is possible (see definition of *débrouillardise* above) for students who exercise a bit of self-discipline when it comes to the temptations of overindulgences in things like *pâtisseries*, *café crèmes*, and cool drinks at bars or cafés. This newsletter will give some rough estimates for the kinds of expenses that students might also want to factor into their budget. These prices are indicative, but not definitive.

Food

Here is a list indicative of current prices for some of the expenses that students are likely to encounter. It represents the minimal expenses for each of the items. You will be in glamorous Paris, so if you're looking for opportunities to spend much more than these lower-end prices, you'll be sure to find them:

Lunch at a restaurant near Sciences Po: 7-20 €
Lunch at one of the local student restaurants ("CROUS"): 3-5 €
Crêpe at a street-side stand: 3-5 €
Sandwich: 3-5 €
Sorbet or Ice-Cream: 4 €
Coffee in a café: espresso 1.20 € standing up at the bar, 2.20-2.50 € sitting down at a table <i>café crème</i> or cappuccino 2.50 € standing up at the bar, 4.50 € sitting down at a table
Glass of wine in a bar or café: 3-8 €
Beer in a bar or café: 3-5 €
Dinner to go: 5-10 €
Dinner at a casual sit-down restaurant: 15-25 €

Baguette: 0.90 €

At a grocery store:

Loaf of bread: 1.80-2.50 €

Liter of milk: 1 €

A kilogram of apples: 2.80 €

¼ kilogram of cheese: 3 €

¼ kilogram of sandwich meat: 3.50 €

Bottle of wine: starts at 2 €

1.5 liter bottle of Coca-Cola: 1.50 €

Entertainment

Films

Because of the exchange rate, films in Paris are typically more expensive than they are in California. A full price ticket costs around 10 €, but most cinemas have special prices that run from 4-6 € for people under 26 or for students. Morning screenings are sometimes as cheap as 5.80 € for everyone.

Clubs

Paris has a rich nightlife scene with live bands and clubs that specialize in many different kinds of music. You're sure to find something to your taste. They are usually very crowded on weekends when admission can run from 10-20 €. Some special nights can be even more expensive. Regular visits to clubs will certainly make significant dents in student budgets.

Museums and exhibits

Paris is of course home to some of the world's richest collections of art. Sciences Po will be providing you with a student identification card that, in the past, has given students free access to the collections of the Musée d'Orsay, the Centre Pompidou, the Musée Carnavalet, the Musée Rodin and the Musée Picasso. Your Sciences Po student ID card will very likely give you free admission to these and many other museums, but at the very least it should get you student-priced admission.

Local Public Transportation

Paris is a great city to walk around in. The very idea of the urban stroll was born here and put into action by 19th century *flâneurs* such as the poet Charles Baudelaire. Paris also offers a very reliable bus, metro and suburban train system that you will undoubtedly use. You will probably want to look into purchasing a [Pass Navigo Découverte](#). It costs 5 € for the initial card and can be bought in any metro station. (Year-long students will want to purchase the [Carte ImagineR](#), valid for the entire year and much cheaper overall than topping up a monthly pass.) Once you have the card, you can purchase unlimited access to public transportation within Paris and the immediate suburbs for 67.10 €* per month. You can also buy a weekly pass for 20.40 €* for certain weeks when you won't need a full month's access to public transportation. Travel to and from the airport or to other destinations in the suburbs is not included with your *Pass Navigo* and must be purchased separately. Since September 2012, however, if you hold a monthly *Pass Navigo*, you can use the public transportation system on weekends and on national holidays to zones beyond the city and its immediate suburbs (e.g., to visit the magnificent cathedral at Chartres) without purchasing a special ticket. Familiarize yourself with the public transportation system, [RATP](#), and all it has to offer in Paris. The site has the very useful feature of providing the easiest way to get from point A to point B. All you have to do is enter your starting and stopping points, and it will give you your best options.

*Price valid at time of this email.

School supplies, clothing, and accessories

School supplies can be somewhat expensive in Paris, but they also have a certain charm. If you are on a very tight budget, you may want to bring some school supplies along with you to avoid some of the extra cost. Cheaper places to purchase notebooks, binders and binder paper include Monoprix and Hema.

You will probably need to buy the usual personal supplies, such as toothpaste, lotion, aspirin, etc. These can also be a little more expensive in Paris. A tube of toothpaste costs 2-3 €, a bottle of shampoo 3-5 €, a box of 20 capsules of aspirin 4.5 €. Do note that aspirin and other pain-relievers can only be purchased in a pharmacy, and not in a grocery store (like in the States).

You will want to bring clothing appropriate for a Paris fall (warm, usually) and winter (cold and rainy). Be sure to pack or plan to buy an umbrella; you will need one during your stay, we guarantee it!

Personal Property Insurance

Students should certainly consider taking out personal insurance on the more valuable items that they are likely to bring with them to Paris—laptops, digital cameras, or other expensive electronic devices. Many students in the past have not done so, and, inevitably, some students will lose valuable objects by leaving them in a train, taxi or in a restaurant, or having them stolen by pickpockets on the look-out for tourists. Your family may be able to add a short-term rider to a current insurance policy that will cover your more valuable items while you are abroad. It would be a great idea to look into this option. You should also familiarize yourself with your [EAP insurance](#).

Day Trips to Destinations within France

Many of you will want to take advantage of easy access from Paris to culturally important locations within France—the Mont Saint Michel or Giverny, or, further afield yet accessible by the high-speed TGV train, Lyon, Marseille, or Nice. Some of these places are close enough to Paris to make for good day-trips. If reserved far enough in advance, TGV trips to the south cost around 60 € each way. Information about train travel within France can be found on the [SNCF](#) website. Sciences Po's "Bureau des Elèves" also organizes weekend trips and excursions.

The Bottom Line

Please remember that the figures provided in this newsletter are only illustrative, and that you will have a great deal of control in terms of the choices you make over what you actually spend. Eating out, going to clubs or bars several times a week, travel, occasional performances and concerts could bring you to spend more than you would on your home campus, and you should budget accordingly.

A word about banknotes: you will find French merchants and even banks reluctant (or even refusing) to take or change larger banknotes (over 50 €). So if you plan to travel with French currency, be sure to request small denominations from your bank or foreign currency exchange agency.

Former students suggest you should plan your expenses well before you leave California and make arrangements to cover them. We strongly advise you to talk over your expenses with anyone who may be helping you finance your studies in Paris. A pre-departure, part-time job or an extra loan may be good ideas to help you prepare financially to get the most out of your time in Paris.

Best of luck with your planning! We look forward to meeting you when you arrive in August!

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