

VISITING FONTAINEBLEAU



Maya was born and raised in Fontainebleau – and while that alone might be reason enough to visit, this guide will tempt you into discovering this charming town.

Fontainebleau is a small town located about 60km southeast of Paris. Known for its historic *Château de Fontainebleau* and forest, it will give you the opportunity to experience the relaxed French countryside.

We have condensed here our favourite things to do in Fontainebleau and some practical aspects. However, for a more in-depth guidance and help to plan your activities in Fontainebleau, have a look at the [city's website](#), or reach out to Maya.

Reaching Fontainebleau

- **By Train:** The most common way to get to Fontainebleau is by train from Paris Gare de Lyon to Fontainebleau-Avon station, a journey of approximately 40 minutes which costs €2.5. From the station, local buses or a short taxi ride will take you into the town or directly to the Château. You can also walk into town – this would take you around 25mn.
- **By Car:** If you're driving, it's about an hour from Paris via the A6 motorway, with ample parking available in town, near the Château and forest entrances. If you wish to explore the forest and nearby villages, driving will be most convenient.

What to do

- You can experience French culture and history at the *Château de Fontainebleau*, which is one of France's most stunning and historically rich royal residences. The *Château* is a UNESCO World Heritage site and has been a royal residence for eight centuries. Napoleon referred to Fontainebleau as «the true home of kings, the house of ages» - it was there that he signed his abdication in 1814. The *Château* is surrounded by over 130 hectares of gardens, including the formal French Garden,

the English Garden (Maya's favourite part), and the *Grand Parterre*, which is the largest formal garden in Europe. Find more information on the [official website](#).

- The **Forest of Fontainebleau** is a natural haven covering over 25,000 hectares. It is a treasure for nature lovers, adventurers and families, offering something for everyone. It's got world class hiking trails and is a renowned rock-climbing destination. There are many spots you can hike to watch the sunset or enjoy a lunchtime picnic – do not hesitate to ask Maya for them. For those willing to get away from urban centres, some rustic accommodation like chalets are also available in the middle of the forest.

- Enjoy a friendly French atmosphere at the **Fontainebleau market**, held on Tuesday, Friday, and Sunday mornings. Shop for fresh local produce, artisanal cheeses, baked goods, and local crafts, and sit in a café on the *Place de la République* (market square) for a coffee and croissant whilst watching the world go by.

- While Fontainebleau isn't in a major wine region, local restaurants and wine shops often offer **wine tastings** featuring French wines from nearby regions like Burgundy or the Loire Valley.

Getting around

- **Walking:** Fontainebleau is compact and walkable – definitely the best way to getting around town.

- **Biking:** Rent a bike if you wish to explore the forest trails, which you can reach from the city centre.

- **Public Transport:** Local buses connect nearby towns and attractions, but may not be very frequent (every 10-15mn). This is the fastest way to the Fontainebleau-Avon train station from town.

Hotels

From our curated selection. Have a look at the city's website provided earlier for more options like B&Bs and cottages, which will be in the surrounding villages of Fontainebleau. We recommend booking relatively in advance, as Fontainebleau gets popular in the summer season.

High-end:

- o Hôtel de Londres
- o Hôtel Napoléon
- o Aigle Noir

Mid-range:

- o Hôtel Victoria
- o Hôtel Mercure

Budget:

- o Ibis Château de Fontainebleau
- o Ibis budget Fontainebleau-Avon
- o Hotel Campanile

Places to eat and drink

- **Best French restaurants:** Le sommelier du château, Le bistrot du Broc (in the nearby village of Bourron-Marlotte), L'Anneau de Mallarmé (in Vulaine-sur-Seine, to enjoy lunch by the river Seine).
- **Best boulangerie:** Dardonville.
- **Best pâtisserie:** L'A Pâtisserie and Dardonville.
- **Best macarons:** Frédéric Cassel.
- **Best breakfast:** Le Délice Impérial (make sure to try their special pâtisserie, the coup de soleil).
- **Best pizza:** La Trattoria. Part of Diyar's agenda every time he visits Fontainebleau.
- **Best burger (with a French touch!):** Yummy Burger.
- **Best pub:** For our British friends missing home, head over to The Glasgow, where you will surely meet the international English-speaking students of the INSEAD school.
- **Best street for a drink:** The *Rue du Coq Gris* is the go-to spot for locals to drink. For a more relaxed vibe, head to the *Rue Montebello* nearby for nice restaurant options. For a game of pool, head to *Eight Ball Café*.
- **Best entertainment:** BO Ranch. Fontainebleau is as famous for bouldering as it is for horse riding. Head to the ranch to watch incredible reining shows (Western riding) whilst enjoying a nice steak and drink. Best reached by car.
- **"Le Fontainebleau" cheese:** Fontainebleau has its own cheese! Head over to any fromagerie to enjoy this soft cheese with red berries coulis on the go.

Nearby villages to visit

Fontainebleau is surrounded by picturesque historical villages that are perfect for exploring more of the French countryside, especially if you have a car.

- **Morêt-sur-Loing:** Charming medieval town with cobblestone streets, half-timbered houses, and stunning views of the Loing River. You can have lovely walks on the riverside and in town during the summer, or book canoeing/kayaking activities, suitable for both beginners and experienced paddlers.
- **Barbizon:** Famously known as '*le village des peintres*' (the village of painters), where 19th-century impressionist and landscape artists like Millet and Rousseau found inspiration.

- **Samois-sur-Seine:** Maya's favourite. Samois is a picturesque village nestled along the Seine River, known for its riverside houses *les Affolantes* and its connection to jazz legend Django Reinhardt, who lived there. Visit the riverside pathways, enjoy local restaurants, and try to attend the **Django Reinhardt Festival**, held in the park of the *Château* on 22-25 June 2025.

- **Thomery:** To enjoy vineyards, heritage walls and tranquil walks along the Seine, head over to Thomery. Make sure you stop at [*Château Rosa Bonheur*](#), who offers amazing food and tea time options in the house of one of the most inspiring painters of her generation.

- **Bourron-Marlotte:** A village that has inspired many artists and writers over the years. Stroll its streets to find charming houses, art galleries, and a tranquil ambiance. Don't miss the [*Château de Bourron*](#), a beautiful 17th-century castle with lovely gardens.