

DIY Versailles Bike Tour

- Buy your Versailles tickets ahead of your adventure. From this link, purchase the "Passport" ticket. <https://billetterie.chateauversailles.fr/index-css5-chateauversailles-lgen-pg1.html>
- Bring your scarf/blanket, money, ID, comfortable biking clothes, jacket, etc. for your day out.
- You should head out of Paris about 8:30AM.
- The Palace is open every day except Monday. For exact hours to each area of Versailles and the Gardens, check here: <http://en.chateauversailles.fr/plan-your-visit/practical-information>
- Transportation from Paris to Versailles by train is very easy. The **RER C train** goes from Paris (St. Michel-Notre Dame, Musée d'Orsay, Invalides or Champs de Mars-Tour Eiffel stations) to Versailles Château. So, in the morning, just go to the St. Michel-Notre Dame subway station by putting it in your phone map. Go down the stairs and buy two tickets to Versailles on the RER C from the subway ticket office. You can show the ticket person the following sentence if you want. It says, Two round-trip tickets to Versailles, please.

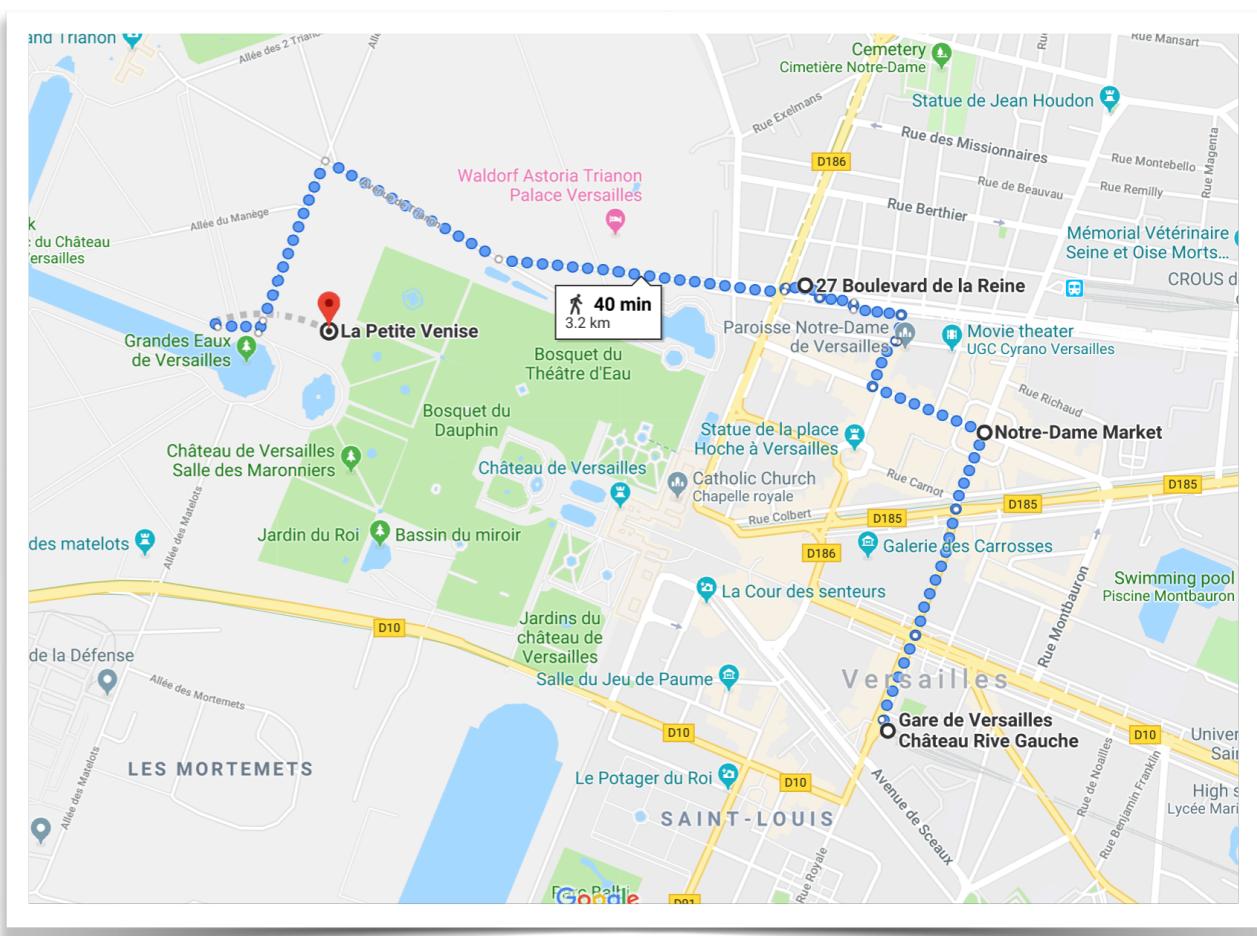
• Deux billets aller-retour pour Versailles, s'il vous plaît.

- The station entrance will look like this:



- The cost of a train to Versailles is about 7€ round trip and takes about 40 minutes. You might want to read this on the train or sometime before: <http://en.chateauversailles.fr/discover/history#today> If you need, help, just ask people. It's okay if some of them don't seem friendly!
- Versailles is the last stop on this train, so you won't miss it! As you exit the train, walk to the famous market, **Marche Notre Dame** for picnic supplies. Just put the market into Google Maps and you will be there shortly. Make sure to visit the market! It's amazing! You can get ALL kinds of food and drinks. Everything you need for a wonderful picnic.

• From the market, walk to **Boulevard de La Reine** and enter by the **Queen's Gate (near The Waldorf Astoria Trianon Hotel)**, turn left at **Aille Sainte Antoinette** to get to **Little Venice (La Petite Venise)** (Grand Canal), where you will rent your bikes. Renting here is so quick and easy! You don't have to follow the exact route in the map below, but do not go through the front gate of the palace, unless you have timed palace entry tickets. If you go to the palace first, you can check your picnic food at the "left luggage" at the entry area and go to the bike area after you visit the palace. If you do not have timed entry tickets, go to the palace late in the day (two hours before closing) to avoid some crowds.



- Rent your bikes near the Grand Canal at the area called Little Venice near the palace end of the canal. From the Versailles website:

Rates: €6.50 per half-hour, €8.50 per hour, €2 per additional 15 minutes, €18 per half-day (4 hours), €20 per day (8 hours). Valid ID required as a deposit. Payment: card or cash.

Opening hours: daily from 10:00 am, closing time depends on the season: 5:30 pm (from 15 February to late March), 6:45 pm (April to October) or 5:00 pm (until 15 November). Last ticket sold 30 mins before closing. Closed every year between mid-November and mid-February.

- After you rent your bikes, explore! Make sure that you see the **Little Trianon and Marie Antoinette's village called the Le Hameau de la Reine**. Many people say that Marie Antoinette's village is their favorite part of the day. To get to the Queen's Hameau, you will follow your phone. When you get nearby, you will lock up your bike and show your Versailles ticket to get in. Walk through the village (explained below) and then go back to your bikes. Have a picnic on the shores of the Grand Canal. Most people enjoy the grounds more than the main palace, so perhaps you don't want to linger toooooo long in the palace. When you are ready to enter the palace, return your bikes and walk up the bit staircase toward the palace. Follow the signs to the entrance. You will probably see a line.
- To get back to Paris, walk back to the Versailles train station and use your return ticket. You can be back in time for dinner in Paris! If you didn't get a return ticket, that's okay! Buy a one-way ticket to Paris (**Saint-Michel Notre Dame is where you will get off the train when you get back to Paris, so watch for the name.**)

Things to read as you explore... (from travelyesplease.com)

Read this when sitting outside, looking at the Palace:

It's hard to believe now, but Versailles first began as a modest hunting lodge.

In 1624, inspired by fond memories of hunting trips to the area, Louis XIII decided to build a small lodge near the country village of Versailles. The building was immediately ridiculed, so the King ordered his architect to undertake reconstruction. A significantly bigger residence emerged, but it was still far from being regal. The architect continued to make modifications, but the lodge remained largely unchanged until the King's death in 1643. It wasn't until Louis XIV was named King, that Versailles was transformed into the luxurious palace we know today.

Louis XIV first discovered Versailles in 1641, when his father sent him there to escape the smallpox outbreak in Saint-Germain. He would return years later, as King, to enjoy the hunt the way his father did. Louis XIV started to see that Versailles was a great place to build- plenty of land, removed from the rebellious people of Paris, yet still within the city's reach.

Soon, Louis XIV set out to create an outward sign of his power- a residence bigger and more beautiful than any other, where his court could gather around him. The so-called Sun King spared no expense in creating his vast complex, its decor loaded with symbols of his glory. It took 50 years of building work, and tens of thousands of men, to give the palace its grandeur.

From 1682-1715 and 1722-1789, Versailles was the seat, and symbol, of the absolute monarchy. The Revolution changed all that, emptying the Château of its furnishings but sparing the actual building. For years after the revolution, the palace was neglected. Restorations were initiated by Napoleon I, and then continued by King Louis XVIII and Charles X. However, Versailles never again would be the seat of power.

In 1833, King Louis-Philippe decided to turn the Château into a museum, dedicated to "all of France's glories." The Museum of the History of France opened in 1837.

Today the Palace of Versailles is on UNESCO's WORLD HERITAGE LIST and is one of France's most popular tourist attractions.

Read this while exploring the grounds, the Trianon Palaces and The Queen's Hamlet:

The Grand Trianon is a small residence in comparison to the main palace at Versailles, but elegant none the less. It was designed in 1687 by Jules Mansart who described it as "A little pink marble and porphyry palace with delightful gardens."

The Grand Trianon was used mainly for hosting family visitors, but the King and his maîtresse-en-titre ("official mistress") would sometimes stay here. The palace was continuously inhabited (apart from the Revolution) welcoming everyone from Peter the Great of Russia to Stanislas Leszczynski, former king of Poland. However, The Grand Trianon's most notable resident was Napoleon and most of installations you see today were commissioned by him.

The Petit Trianon

The Petit Trianon was a gift to Marie-Antoinette from Louis XVI when he became King. Marie-Antoinette soon transformed the gardens to reflect the English style of small brooks and picturesque lawns. The Petit Trianon is very small and doesn't take long to visit.

Exploring the English Garden

Marie-Antoinette much preferred the natural landscapes of English gardens over the restrictive symmetry and flowerbeds of French gardens. While my preferences are for French gardens, I still really enjoyed talking a relaxing walk through the English garden at the Petit Trianon.

The Queen's Hamlet (Hameau)

The Queen is famed for her desire to escape the pageantry of the Versailles court and this rural hamlet was the perfect place to do so. Marie-Antoinette desperately craved a village of her own, so in 1783 she ordered construction of the Queen's Hamlet. She wanted her hamlet to resemble a Norman village, complete with thatched-roof cottages spread out around Big Lake. The Queen would regularly come here to enjoy the charms of country life and nobody was allowed visit her here without her

We highly recommend you save enough time on your visit to Versailles to explore the Queen's Hamlet. It's not only beautiful, but you get a glimpse into the personal, slightly more relatable life of the Queen. The best part though, was that there were no crowds. We had this place almost entirely to ourselves!

Twelve houses were built in Marie-Antoinette's hamlet, ten of which still stand.

Forming the reception area is the Queen's house, billiard room, boudoir, mill, stove room, and refreshment dairy which were reserved for use by the Queen and her guests.

Four of the surrounding houses were used by the peasants and one house was reserved for meal preparation and domestic chores.

The largest building of the hamlet is the Queen's house and billiard room. This is where the queen's private chambers were, as well as her parlors and salons. The two buildings are connected by a covered, slightly curved gallery decorated with trellises and flowers.

Although the Queen's cottages look rustic from the outside, their interiors were thoughtfully decorated and often luxuriously furnished, making them suitable for entertaining. The Queen would often host dinners in her house and the mill.

Each of the houses in the hamlet had its own small garden and their balconies and staircases were decorated with flowers, much like they are today. I loved the climbing vines that covered some of the walls and arbors arching over the paths. In fact the rose bushes are the same ones that were planted for the queen and the sheep are dependents of those sheep! When real peasants learned of the Queen's village, they were incensed. Thankfully all of these sites survived the revolution.