

Students Speak:

What to Know Before You Go

A Guide for Northwestern Students at the Sciences Po

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Sciences Po **Paris, France**

Introduction

I'm going to give you tons of advice and tips in this mini-guide and you'll be better off for it. But, by no means will this make you completely stress-free. If other questions pop up, I'm available to try and answer them by e-mail. Still, I could answer all the questions you want and some things will go wrong in France. You will be frustrated and angry, maybe even upset. Just know that no matter how much you prepare for next year, you will still be surprised and caught off-guard. That's the whole point of going to a FOREIGN country. You will encounter new things. With that said, relax. Make yourself either a mental or physical list of things you want to do/achieve while in France. This will help you focus a little. And, don't sell yourself short. My friends and I got to do lots of interesting things. Internships are plentiful, creative opportunities, travel, etc. Whatever it is that interests you, don't put it on hold because you are abroad.

You may already know a lot of things I discuss below, so skip that stuff. I wrote assuming zero prior knowledge. Also, don't take anything here too close to heart, as you should make your own assumptions of the city and the school. This guide is what the experience was to me. Use it only as a jumping-off point.

Language

The thing that is probably worrying you the most is the language problem. Unless you've lived in a French-speaking country before, you are in for a bumpy start. But, when I say start, I mean first 30 seconds. You will be amazed at how good your mouth is at surviving. You have no choice, so you will speak. You'll get off that plane, everything will be in French, everyone around you will be speaking French and so will you. The first three months, you will have an improvement level of about 15% each day. By winter break, you will notice a significant difference. If you leave the country, this time upon returning, you will be comforted to hear French. That is when you know you're finally owning this language. This process is supplemented by a 90-minute per week French class at ScPo, which isn't always that helpful. You are placed in one of five French levels according to the recommendation of your orientation-time teachers.

Pre-departure: Do's and Don'ts

- DO make sure your parents or someone back here in the States has access and authority over your accounts. You're far away and they might have to take care of certain things while you're gone. Better safe than sorry.

- DON'T buy adapters for your stuff here. They're cheaper over there and easier to find. Just go to the FNAC (a huge store similar to Best Buy that you find all over Paris).
- DO make about 15 photocopies of all your important documents. Leave 2 with your parents and take the rest with you. The French love paper!!! What are important documents? Just in case, take a copy of your parents' tax returns for last year (your prospective landlord might request them). Also take all the forms the consulate required of you to get your three-month visa: proof that you have enough money to live in France for one year, Insurance, ScPo's acceptance/enrollment letter, vaccination records.
- DON'T take tons of personal photos. These are also cheaper and easier to come by in Paris. Almost every Metro stop has one of those booths and they actually make great quality pictures. You get 4 color ID photos for 24 francs. They're cheap because you'll need tons of them for just about everything. Take about 3 sets of photos for starters. People there just expect you to have extras in your wallet at all times. Even discussion section teachers ask for them on your first day.
- DO (it's most likely too late for this but) consider buying a one-way ticket to Paris because travel there is cheaper, too. You can buy your return over there for a lot cheaper usually.
- DO Bring a laptop, printer, Discman and portable speakers — also favorite CD's, a few picture of friends and family. Film and developing is cheap in Paris. A good place is Photostation. They're all over the place.
- DO Keep NU updated with your info there. Have documents sent to you in Paris if you, not your parents, always take care of your own things.
- DO travel light. You have a whole year to collect junk. Leave some room to bring it back. Only take the stuff you really like to wear. Paris apartments are small, so just imagine the closets. Besides, leave yourself money and space to buy clothes there. It'll be really nice when you come back to have some clothes from your year in Paris. The best thing is that at the end of January through early February, they have some insane sales. From the already cheap stuff to designer labels (I mean the actual designer's stores, not a TJ Maxx thing) all discount everything in stock as much as 75%. I bought a full-length winter coat for \$50. It's really fun, too, because literally the whole city is on sale and every Parisian is checking-out the deals. It gets cold there, but not too cold. Nothing compared to Chicago. No down-coats required. Just a wool-coat, gloves, hat, scarf are more than enough. A raincoat would really come in handy too. Paris actually has more annual rainfall than London.

Initial paperwork

Paris can be a nightmare when you first arrive because you will have tons of paperwork to fill out, lines to form, bureaucracy to conform to. Just do it all, don't complain and soon it will all be over. These are the main categories and their requisites.

- **ScPo enrollment** — s curit sociale (or proof of your own insurance), proof of residence (copy of lease, but they ll give you a temporary student card while you re still looking for a home), titre de sejour, passport photos, passport copy and the completed dossier you receive upon arrival.
- **Titre de sejour** — you apply for a convocation (an appointment) to appear for your titre de sejour from Sciences Po on the first days you re there. You ll see a Mme. Foche if she s still around. You need to complete a dossier which you will receive upon arrival at the DAIE and furnish the necessary documents (the ones for enrollment), you ll also have to pay for your timbres fiscales (I think that s another 300 F). You get the date of the appointment in the mail, which is why you need an address (again, here ask someone to receive your mail if the apartment doesn t seem to be appearing anytime soon. Just ask them to put a paper on their mailbox with your last name and when you address the envelope with Mme. Foche put your name followed by chez so-and-so). You present yourself at the Pr fecture de Police on the ple de la Cit (Metro Cit). Again, you make a line, you wait. Thanks to Mme. Foche, you wait a little less since you ve already bought your timbres fiscales. You do actually leave this place with your titre de sejour, though. Before you leave you make another convocation and pay another 300 F, this time for the OMI (a medical exam for all immigrants, there s no getting out of this). The exam is pretty basic, x-rays, eye exam, weight, height, urine sample, and a doctor checks you out sans clothes. You re only allowed your knickers and some people got a very special doctor, myself included. Don t be shocked if you walk into the room and she screams at you to strip and fast, then repeats the command at the sight of your scared face. She does this to everyone. She s one of those few French in a rush.
- **Bank account** — for the bank account you need all the things you presented to ScPo to enroll and the proof of residence. Try and get around this by asking a friend (this could even be someone at the DAIE) to say you live with them. You can file a change of address later. The BNP on Boulevard Raspail behind ScPo also asked me for my titre de sejour before giving me an ATM card (carte bleue). Do this quickly as it will save you headaches. Once you get your titre de sejour, present it to them and you will have your carte bleue. Some people who went to Soci t Gn rale said they didn t need to present the titre de sejour and got their carte bleue the same day, so ask around. All banks offer a free checking account, which includes free overdraft protection up to 3000 F. It s amazing.
 - RIB - rel ve d identit bancaire. You get this from your bank and it works like a voided check to give people your bank info. Most things in France are done on pr l vements automatiques (direct withdrawal). It s just easier. You can also get this service for your phone (this also saves you from paying a 2000 F deposit) and your electricity.
- **Imagine R** — here s another dossier you have to fill out quick because it requires mailing and waiting. Get all the stuff above done quickly and send this in with a student card, the titre de sejour, passport photos and your RIB. The turnaround is about one month. Buy the monthly carte orange when you first arrive and then mail

this out as quickly as possible. You can get the application at any Metro guichet. If they take more than the 4 or so weeks, save your metro tickets because they'll refund you the money and charge you a month of the Imagine R instead. It'll save you lots. It's only 165 F per month for unlimited use of the Metro, bus and RER, including free rides throughout I Ile de France on weekends (that includes nearby chateaus like Rambouillet and Versailles). Although, the card requires a 12-month commitment, don't worry about it. Even if you do pay 12 months, do the math and you'll see you still save. But, you don't have to pay the 12 months. Close your bank account before you leave and that's that.

- **CAF** — for the CAF you have to wait to have a permanent residence. Make sure you ask your landlord before you sign the lease if you can apply for the CAF (Allocations Familiales). If not, you might still want to rent the place. But, keep in mind the CAF is a sure 600-700 F/month if you share a place and 1,000-1,200 F if you rent alone. Everyone gets this if they only apply, guaranteed. For this, again you need passport copies, titre de sejour, ScPo student card, lease copy, electric/phone bill and RIB. Send this out, and you'll get a monthly direct deposit within a couple of months. It might take longer, but it is completely retroactive. You'll get any backed-up months together in your first deposit.

Orientation

The orientation serves more to help you meet the other people in the program than anything else. You take classes in written and spoken French and a more informal conversation course. It's pretty intensive with about 15 hours a week of class time but little to no homework. These three weeks are your time to find an apartment and get your first introduction to the city in which you will be living for at least the next nine months. They pick good teachers and the whole experience is fun.

During this time the DAIE (international student office) plans outings and special events for all the international students. (The DAIE will remain a place you can go to for help and advice throughout the year.) You don't have to go to everything, but pick the ones that interest you and participate. It's another great way to meet people. And, try not to cling to other Americans. It's natural. You will see groups formed along language-lines. And, this is OK. It's healthy to be around those who are familiar. But don't close yourself off to them. The reason I had such a great time was because my friends were from all over the world. Besides, this way whenever you return to Europe or go to any of these other places you'll have people to stay with and show you around.

During this time, we also signed up for Tandem. This is a conversation exchange. A list is put up where you write-in which language/s you speak and which one/s you want to learn. Another way to meet people, and here the French get involved, too. I got a job out of this. A ScPo and ENA graduate, working in the Treasury Department paid me 75 francs/hour to teach him Spanish. We would meet in a caf close to school twice a week and that was my pocket money. There are plenty of employment opportunities. Look in FUSAC weekly for babysitting or tutoring. They are especially interested in English mother-tongue people like us.

At the end of these three weeks, you get one week of vacation. Do what you want with it. Some people stayed to calmly enjoy Paris; others took this opportunity to get their first taste of neighboring cities or countries. Either option is a good idea depending on what you feel like doing. Oh, and people are very open during this time. Organize a group to travel with. Everyone is up for a good time and adventure at this point.

Sciences Po

Registration

Before the break, you register. It's kind of a joke really because you don't choose any classes. Whatever you put on your application when you first applied to the school is it. The lectures are only offered at one time and your French level and corresponding 1 hour/week course is determined by the test you take the first day you show up to ScPo in September. You do get to choose the times of your discussion sections. Expect a long wait during this process. But by this time, you've already done the enrollment part. Here's where you need to fill out tons of forms, make tons of photocopies, buy insurance, get the carte de sejour in order, etc.

Classes

Classes are not the most important part of this year. Don't tell anyone I told you this, though. Do go to all your classes. It's only about 10 hours/week. Concentrate, take notes (it improves your French), but don't kill yourself. Look up examples of fiches on your subject on the web. There are several good sites. Read *Le Monde Diplomatique* and their thorough surveys. Keep up with the news; it's very interesting to see how other cultures treat the same news matter. Expand your ideas about learning. This is where you should be creative. Don't dig yourself into classwork. Leave time for all the other facets of study abroad.

You'll have two lectures of your choice (remember when you applied you had to choose history v politics), and one lecture, which everyone goes to, *espaces europeens*. For each 90-minute lecture, we would have a 90-minute discussion section. That's it. Lectures are big and go quickly. You don't ask questions. You don't discuss. Even your discussion sections are pretty discussion light. That's where you do all your work. The French system, or at least the ScPo system is special. It entails that you read about 50 books per class. Since they invented *joie de vivre* and no one is expected to read that much and still have time to stroll the *Jardins de Luxembourg*, what you do instead is split up the work among your classmates and this division of labor is supervised by your *maitre de conference*, the equivalent of an NU TA. The discussion section is called a *conference* and the lecture a *cours magistral*. You are usually responsible for about 2 books. You do a book report on these, which is called a *fiche de lecture*. These are standardized papers. There is a very definite way of doing them. Most *maitres de conference* have you present these *fiches* before the class. These presentations should be

restricted to 10 minutes and should go right to the heart of the matter. The French are insane about form, their form.

The M thode

A pattern exists, which they feel they have worked and perfected. Follow it. The idea is that you come out of here and can use these skills in government. Most members of parliament do not know everything about every issue that they come across. They have though all been through Sciences-Po and l'ENA (cole Nationale d'Administration) as have their assistants. This is where the Sciences-Po m thode comes into play. The assistant gets a brief note, saying something as vague as Meritocracy in France s educational system, and they re expected to churn out a tight paper that would make for a 15-minute speech on the subject (an outline of about 4-5 pages). Your introduction should be the slimmest part. It should identify the subject, the probl matique (what makes this subject worth writing about, the controversy), and 2-3 subtopics that illustrate the probl matique. This whole thing is just an excuse to insert a few important personalities associated with the subject and the most important authors who have written on the subject.

You can organize your fiche chronologically (with your subparts covering equal number of years, of course) or thematically (this is as creative as you re allowed to be while still conforming to the m thode). In your conclusion, you should actually take the topic to the next level. You answer the question in the introduction, so your conclusion has already been made. Be as straightforward as possible, too. Subtlety is completely useless. This is a utilitarian piece of work. You are either writing to quickly brief a functionary for his meeting with the country s high school superintendents or trying to get your class some extra knowledge going into the midterm. If you realize that this is your mission, the task simplifies itself.

As cynical as I sound describing the m thode, it actually can be very useful and does streamline your writing. You learn to work off of a detailed outline and put bold headings on everything. It s not pretty, but it is useful. Most of the work is done in your reading and research. The paper sort of writes itself. It s very short, too, so that you don t have to waste energy filling up space with nonsense just to make it look substantial. These are called dissertations. A plan d taill is what you work from. In some classes, the maitre will ask one person to do a dissertation and another to do a plan d taill on the same subject just to get the class two different takes on the topic and better prepare them to act like they know something about this on their exam. First-hand knowledge is not really rewarded nor sought. This is what I call the downside of the m thode. Keep an open mind. Remember this is about more than classes.

Also, do your work in advance and show it to your maitre. They re very good about giving you guidance on your fiches and dissertations. They will actually give you as much help as you re willing to take. Remember that the maitre is preparing you for the midterm and final by breaking up the course work among you and your classmates. The quality of these papers determines the performance of the students on the exams. They ll give you the necessary push to improve your work, if you re willing to take it.

Otherwise, ask other students, neighbors, or friends for advice on stuff. The French students are the best resource for help on coursework.

Library

The library is a funny place. Maybe things will change for you guys, but I doubt it. The place is not well organized or efficient. Expect more lines and rude service. You search for books on a computer database. You fill out a yellow card. You make a line to date and turn-in your card after it is inspected by the guy behind the counter. If anything on your card is sub par, if for example the date stamp is askew, the kind man behind the desk will ask you, no scold you, to go back and fill out a new card. Don't even bother protesting. They have all the power in this relationship. Re-fill your card and re-make your line. Once you finally get the card right, you must go to library purgatory while you wait 60-90 minutes for your book or books (the limit is 5). Don't get comfortable wherever you choose to serve your time, though; if you pass the 90 minutes, your books will be mercilessly returned. I never had the audacity to try this, so I don't know exactly how long you'd have to wait if this most dreaded of fortunes were to befall you, but I would give up on the idea of getting those books for at least another day. They'd have to be returned, re-shelved, and then re-fetched. Don't let it happen to you. Well, once the time has expired, the fun begins because you get more face time with the fabulous library personnel. You make another line, show your library card, and he goes to the shelves behind him where they hold your books after getting them from the secret, hidden shelves only they are allowed to see. This is when you get back Freud's Interpretation of Dreams in the original German instead of Henry Kissinger's Diplomacy. Of course, it's your fault that they got the wrong books. Although, the library-card nazi forces you to clearly write out publishing date and city, author and title in addition to the call number. The call number is all he looks at through his 3-D glasses when he decides to get your books. You guessed it, fill out another card for the missed numbers. Oh, and the other two books you wanted: one has been missing since 1899 (although the computer said three copies were available), and the other was found but it's fallen into 20 pieces since being published in March 2000 (as snobby and perfectionist as ScPo students seem to be about their own appearances, they seem to use their books to take out all the frustrations of their elite upbringing). Keep an open mind on this one too. You'll learn to manage and the French relaxed way of life will finally get to you. By January, none of this will bother you any more. Everything else in your life will be just so perfect that this just adds the necessary color to your days and makes for a great story over some wine at your neighborhood brasserie.

School Supplies

I love the supplies you find at Gibert Jeune by Place Saint Michel. They have a huge selection, relatively good prices, and way cool stuff. It's much better than anything you'll find at Office Max. The French just do it better, so don't bring these things either. Oh, and go to this store the day you arrive in Paris to buy the Paris Indispensable. It is a fabulous pocket-sized map of the entire city and its outskirts. It costs maybe 50 francs

and is worth every centime. It has an index of every rue and ruelle, historic sites, monuments, hospitals. It has a metro map, bus map and routes, everything and anything that has to do with navigating this city. With this little book, you'll never get lost.

Computers

Bring your own. This sucks at ScPo. If you can, even bring a printer. It will make your life much easier. Even better if you could get the French corrector on Word. Internet can be cheap. Free service providers and Primaliste Internet. When you go set up your phone at France Telecom, tell them about your phone usage and ask them to recommend any and all discount offers. Some require small monthly fees but they pay for themselves in savings. This includes Primaliste Internet. It gives you a 75% discount on your calls to your Internet dial-up number after 10 pm. There are plenty of free service providers like Liberty Surf, you can find their installation CD s at stores like Darty and FNAC. Look into Internet phone services, too. These obviate the need for long-distance phone calls. Your parents can save by researching with their long-distance carriers about the cheapest rates available to France.

Exams

You have two exams per class, which account for the entirety of your Cours Magistral grade. You have two grades per class. One for the Cours Magistral and the other for the Conf rence. The Conf rence grades are made up of your fiche/dissertation grades and participation. You are give 4-hours for the midterm and final, which usually take place on a Saturday. There s an 8 am exam and 2 pm exam. Quite a few people had two exams the same day. They won t apologize to you for it, so just suck it up. You should study, sleep well the night before, have a light breakfast, take some snack in with you (but take advantage of the bathroom breaks to buy yourself a soft drink and stretch your legs or just change scenery for five minutes.) You think 4 hours is a lot, which I still think it is. I usually took 3.5 hours, though, and I hate sticking around dwelling over an exam. Somehow, you use the time. I think this is just a cultural thing. You learn to take your time. You should (ScPo suggests you should) spend the first hour thinking about the question and free-writing, the next hour writing a plan d taill , the next one writing and the last one proof-reading. This really actually works out just about right. It s not fun, but tests never are. Just think, there will only be eight of these the whole year. You don t take exams for your espaces europeens class, french class, other language class or enseignement d ouverture. You choose an enseignement d ouverture for the second semester. This is a more informal class with cool topics such as Parfums des villes. You ll enjoy this. When you first get to ScPo, you also get the option of testing for a language besides French if you want to follow courses in that language throughout the year. ScPo is famed for having horrible language courses, so I don t know how much you ll get out of it. Still, it s free. There s nothing to lose. Also, think about the people around you who are all native speakers of the language you re interested in (German, Japanese, whatever). They are most likely interested in practicing their English, so think about language exchanges (tandem).

Money Matters

Travel

When you start getting ready to travel, which might be as soon as the break in between orientation and classes in early October, you'll realize how cheap it is. You can find great last minute flights on degriftour.fr and lastminute.fr. (I think the British lastminute just bought degriftour so they might be the same site now). Any travel agency will give you great deals, too. You can expect to find a roundtrip flight to Rome for about 950 F to give you an idea. Trains in France are very expensive. There is a student discount card, called simply douze-vingt-cinq (12-25 for the ages who can apply), but unless you plan to do lots of train travel within France whatever the one-time fee is can actually be a waste. It's up to you to make the comparisons depending on your plans. The SNCF (the national rail service) also has information booths at all the gares (train stations) and sprinkled about the city (there's one on Rue de Rennes close to ScPo on the way to Briocherie where every Wednesday around 4 pm you can buy a maxi pain au chocolat and a coke or OJ for 10 F — it's awesome!).

The Eurostar runs between London and Paris mainly but also take you to Brussels. The Paris-London route takes 3 hours and take you from Metro station to Metro station. If you nap, you forget you just crossed the Channel and an international border. It is a very cool thing. It's also relatively cheap for students — 700 F return (that's how the Brits say roundtrip, the French call it aller-retour).

In Spain and Italy, trains are incredibly cheap. The most expensive trip would run you about \$30. Here it really pays to just pay as you go. The trains all over Europe are very dependable, they run at all times, so no advance purchase is really necessary. Sometimes, though on Sunday nights between major cities like Rome and Paris you might want to buy the night before at the station.

There's also the Europass, which is great for traveling within France and Germany where trains are quite expensive. You don't have to buy it in the States like everyone tells you. There's an office in Paris that does it and at a discount. I think it's called world travel. They're in the third, Metro Etienne-Marcel. 2, rue Dussoubf (01.42.36.92.82). Again, make sure you think about what it is you want to do and if a pass will really work with your plans and your budget.

More ways to save

- With First Chicago, cash advances are free and have no limit. Way better than wires or anything similar.
- Louvre discount card — 100 F for one year of admission and free guest Monday nights
- Tony and Guy — hair institute at 1, rue de Place Andr Malraux, where you can get a free haircut
- Discount Opera tickets — available at both the old and the new opera for every show, just ask at the ticket booth

Projected Monthly Expenses

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|-------------|---|
| Rent | 1800 — 3000 (the standard is 100F/sq. meter) |
| Electricity | 300 — 500 (every two months, higher in the winter) |
| Phone | varies, but even local calls are very expensive |
| Metro | 165 |
| Groceries | 700 — 800 (this includes laundry detergent, shampoo, cleaning supplies) |
| Going out | varies (some clubs are no cover, others are 100. Wine is 20F/glass, cocktails about 45F, movies range from 33 — 49 F) |
| Books | 0 (you don't have to buy any books) |
| Total | 3000 — 5500 |

Go ahead and buy a second-hand TV. You can find them advertised around ScPo or in the FUSAC magazine. Expect to pay 600 — 800 F for a 13-inch color, almost-new set. You can re-sell it before leaving. You'll also need to buy a phone, you can find that at Darty for cheap. Don't bother with an answering machine because France Telecom has a good answering service for only 10F/month (when I was there the first 3 months were free, too). You might need an iron and blow-dryer. Those are also cheapest at Darty. Darty is everywhere. Look up the closest one in the yellow pages.

Paris and the French

Transportation

- **Metro** - this is a wonderful system. The El doesn't even compare. Trains run constantly throughout the day. You never wait more than 5 minutes at any stop. As it gets later, the trains space out more but never more than 10-12 minutes. Service stops around 12:30 every night. The exact time depends on the line and the stop. There are tables at each stop that give you this time and they're quite punctual. If you want to stay out later but don't want to pay for a taxi, you can take the Noctambus. These buses run around most of the city. They are lettered all the way up to P, I think. Again, the schedules are posted on the bus stops, marked by a cute little moon to identify the night schedule. All these routes come out of Chatelet. This means that first you take a bus to get to Chatelet and then you grab one to take you home. They run every 30 minutes and begin service at 1am. It's not the fastest way and sometimes you get some weirdos on the bus, but I never had a problem. The alternative is to pay the taxi, which is not too expensive, or walk, which is often quite pleasant. The Noctambus is included on your Imagine R. Paris is so beautiful that even 45-minute walks seem pretty short. The state-run public transport company is called RATP. They tend to go on strike quite a bit. Watch out! When calculating travel times, the Metro takes one minute per stop and 5 minutes per correspondance (line changes). It is very quick. Sometimes it's worth it to walk a little extra just to get on a direct line. It's a real blessing to live by one of the Metro hubs because it

gives you more options. Those stops are at all the main squares: Chatelet, Bastille, Nation, Republique, all the Gares, Saint-Michel, etc. Then you have stops all over the city. It's hard to walk two blocks without walking over one.

- The **buses** are wonderful, too. There are countless routes and they run every 5-10 minutes. The Metro can start to make you feel like a rat, so the bus is a great option. This is also part of your Imagine R plan. Look in your Paris Indispensable map to see which buses work for you. Take the bus over the Metro always during your first weeks in the city. They are a wonderful way to get situated. You don't learn anything about the lay of the land from underground.
- The third public transport option is the **RER**. This is the equivalent of the Metro. It does longer hauls and works more like an express. Use it to get around but be careful when you start out with it. Some people get confused. There are five lines (A-E). Some run in two directions and then fork into two or three more. Not every train that passes on the same platform makes all the stops, so you have to watch the screens to make sure the train pulling up is the one you want. Also, these don't run as often as the Metro.
- **Taxis** can be a pain. You have to go to a taxi stand and wait in line, for starters. Sometimes you can flag them down. They're pretty expensive. A ride from the airport will run you around 250 F. It's about 70F from the Arc de Triomphe to Bastille, just to give you some idea. The other caveat is that most taxis won't take more than three passengers. You have to ask permission for a fourth and don't even dream of requesting a fifth.
- Lots of Parisians get around on **rollerblades**. They even have a parade of rollerbladers every Friday night. It starts at 10 pm from Place d'Italie and goes on until 1 am. More than 10,000 people zip through the city with police escorts. Every night is a different route and the police stop traffic for the mass. You should really try this if you like rollerblading.

Weekly guides - LYLO at FNAC, Pariscope, Aden, Officiel des Spectacles

A lot goes on in Paris every day of every week. Keep on top of things through any combination of these guides. You can find LYLO for free at any FNAC. It's a more underground guide, geared towards young people. At any tabac, you can find either the Officiel des Spectacles or Pariscope every Wednesday for 3F. They have the same information and really only vary in layout. Every Thursday (actually Wednesday afternoon), you can find Aden in Le Monde. This is a great guide. It doesn't list as much as the other ones, but it gives you a lot more information about the things they do list. They also have very good taste and usually recommend great movies, plays and concerts. It's the best place to start when considering what's cool for the next week.

Meeting the French

The mixed curriculum will help a lot, but ScPo students tend to be kind of closed. Make a real effort to meet and then to actually form a friendship. It might turn out that again the international students form a sort of clique, but really try and integrate yourself. Also,

don't limit yourself to ScPo, that's a very non-representative group of French. Reach out to your neighbors, your baker, your butcher. These are friendships that do a lot to round out your idea of the country. And, remember Paris is not France.

France: there's not only Paris

France is a beautiful country. Go out and see it. There's Mt. Saint Michel, Bordeaux, St. Emilion, Cap Ferret, the whole South, Nimes, Montpellier, Versailles, Loire Valley. See as much of it as you can. It's all worthwhile. Take advantage of all those 3-day weekends and explore.

Favorite hangouts

- **Parks** — Paris has some beautiful parks and gardens. Most travel guides (anything from Lonely Planet to Fodor's) will give you a good breakdown of all the places of interest. Some of my favorites are The *Palais Royal* because it's cozy and sort of hidden. I also like the *Parc Andre Citroen* because it's got amazing fountains and pools (Metro Balard). The *Jardins de Luxembourg* will never disappoint. Another really cool, secluded park is the one at the very tip of the Ile de la Cite. I don't know what it's called, but it has a Holocaust Memorial in it. I'd never heard of it and only stumbled upon it while walking around aimlessly as I often did. I recommend it highly, the walking around, it's the best way to get to know the city.
- **Squares** — The area around the *Centre Georges Pompidou* is wonderful. There are cafes with outdoor seating and you'll always get to catch some sort of street performer. The *Place des Vosges* in the Marais is my favorite. There's almost always live music and everyone seems to gather here to play chess. Again, here the options are countless. Do some personal discovery or look in any guide.
- **Bars/clubs** — The Marais has lots of great bars (*Chez Richard, Caf du Tresor* and countless others), also the Menilmontant area and Bastille (take time to explore Rue Keller behind the main bar drag on Rue de Lappe and Rue de la Roquette). Paris isn't really a cool bar city, though. London is better for that. Still, you will find some places, especially in these three areas. The coolest spot last year was *Barrio Latino* (Rue du Faubourg. St. Antoine, Metro Bastille). The Latin thing, like here, is very in. This is a beautiful, huge restaurant/bar (4 floors). They play Latin music, serve some Latin American fare but is by no means anywhere near authentic. You should go once and if you like it I guess you should go back. It wasn't really my place. You can't even dance. If you actually like Latin music and like to dance it, the best place to go is *Latina Caf* on Champs Elyses (Metro George V). It's free on weekdays and 100 F on the weekend with two drinks included (drinks are around 50F, so it's actually not a bad deal). They play good music and leave plenty of room to dance. Barrio Latino has no cover but the later you go, the snobbier they get. Dress to kill if you want to get in. My favorite place happened to luckily be on the street I lived on. This place is actually one of the coolest places in the city, complete with celebrity sightings. It's called *Le Reservoir* (Rue de la Forge-Royale). Most nights there's no cover and on weekends they always have wonderful acts (anything from groove to performance

art). It's also a restaurant/bar combo. It's a nice place to go with friends for a special dinner (it's kind of expensive) and then stay for the show and then stay for the club until the sun comes up. Take people here. You'll be a hero for it. Near Place de la République on Faubourg du Temple, you have two options: a Brazilian resto/club and the only edgy place I found in Paris, Gibus (no cover on Wednesdays).

- **Restaurants** — Rue Monsieur le Prince in the sixth has good Indian and Japanese restaurants with menus for 100F. Mabillon, closeby, is another great restaurant hub. One of my favorite restaurants was *Chez Gladine* in the 13th (Rue des Cinq Diamants). This is a Basque restaurant with a delicious chèvres salad and veau campagnarde. Unlike most Paris restos, the portions here are huge. Try their Rioja wine. You can afford it here, when salads big enough to be meals cost about 40 F.

Neighborhoods

When searching for the perfect, nay available apartment, you will probably think about neighborhoods. You don't really have to be close to school. I lived a 30-minute bus/metro ride away and never got annoyed. I was never late either. A friend of mine lived a 5-minute walk from the place and was never on time. I guess it sort of depends on you. But, the neighborhood directly around Sciences-Po is the most expensive in Paris. You could get lucky like my friend and find a place in a beautiful building right across from the Bon Marché (the poshest department store in Paris, which is fun just to visit). She should have been paying a fortune for her cute studio but the building was under renovation. The French are vain aesthetes. Capitalize on it. But, these are rare occasions. Most likely, you'll have to find a reasonably priced place and you will get exactly what you pay for. Everyone has different budgets, but as students I encourage you not be too lavish in your living expenses. If you've got a large allowance, spend it on better things, like travel and opera tickets. Don't squander your money on a luxury apartment on the Champs-Élysées. It's just not the time for that.

Don't use an agent. You don't need it. Use the weekly apartment guides. You can find them at any tabac. I don't remember how much they cost, but it can't be more than 20 francs. They come out on Thursday; they're *Particulier a Particulier* (www.pap.fr), *Se Loger* (seloger.fr) and *l'Immobilier*. Also, look in *FUSAC*. This is the French-American connection magazine. It's free and you can find it anywhere where you would suspect to find Americans. Also check Irish and English bars, student travel agencies, the Basile, and the Sciences Po bar on the corner of St. Guillaume and Grenelle.

You can live in pretty much any neighborhood when it comes to the distance factor. The city is very compact. Rather than physical distance, it's more important to consider what Metro line or bus route your apartment is closest too. A direct Metro or bus ride can save an enormous amount of time. **See the Transportation section for more on Metros and buses.** ScPo is nearly equidistant from three stops: St. Germain (line 4), Sèvres-Babylone (10 & 12) and Rue du Bac (12).

Arrondissements

Paris is split-up into arrondissements (1-20). They're like petals of a flower and go clockwise.

- **1er & 2 me** — this is a pretty expensive neighborhood with the Louvre, Place de la Concorde, embassies, the old stock exchange, very expensive restaurants, pretty aristocratic
- **3 me** — here things start to become possible. You have the sex district around Montorgueil. Nonetheless, it's not a bad place to live. It's central and you can find well-priced housing.
- **4 me** — my favorite, le Marais. It is the oldest neighborhood in Paris and you can feel it. This is on the higher side like the third but you can still find affordable places.
- **5 me** — this is one of those arrondissements that could be very good or bad. It's the student area, the Quartier Latin. You might be trapped in an ultra-touristy area or on a leafy street where real people live. It's a toss-up but a possibility. The location is good especially in relation to ScPo.
- **6 me** — Odeon and the Medical School are here. Odeon is the big movie theater square (Metro Odeon). Also, lots of students which means lots of affordable housing and good bars, too. There's an arcade here with some cool spots including the Bar St. Germain. This is a great bar with no cover and good live bands. The catch: 72 F for a pint and you're expected to order at least a couple for the privilege of being there. Mabillon is full of great restaurants and bars (Rue de la Princesse, Metro Mabillon)
- **7 me** — this is THE neighborhood. Catherine Deneuve, the Colombian artist Botero and I'm sure countless others call this place home. It's beautiful and very chic. All the tiny streets are littered with designer stores, jazz bars and amazing apartment buildings. It's also the most expensive quartier in Paris. Still, you never know. You might find something. ScPo is in this arrondissement.
- **8 me** — this is also a very expensive quartier with the Champs-Élysées running through it. Again, you know your budget and your tastes.
- **9 me et 10 me** — these kind of go together because they're smaller and less distinctive. These are nice areas with affordable apartments but also the Moulin Rouge and Crazy Horse and even less desirable strip joints. It could work, though.
- **11 me & 12 me** — this is a good area because it has Bastille, Mnilmontant and République and is close to the Marais. Be careful not to be thrown on the eastern fringes of these arrondissements, though, because then you're just too far. It's also very cheap to live here and you're right in the middle of it all.
- **13 me** — quiet, nice area. You have Place D'Italie and the Cité Universitaire, not much else, though.
- **14 me** — always seemed very far and kind of boring to me.
- **15 me** — it has a reputation for being yuppyish. It's like a Parisian Lincoln Park, or at least it's becoming that.
- **16 me** — this is the definition of the aristocratic neighborhood. It has Trocadero, the Eiffel Tower.

- **17 me** — very family oriented almost suburban feel to this quartier on one end, but you're in Montmartre at the other end of it. It's a big arrondissement; you have choices.
- **18-20 me** — these are the least desirable places. They are said to be a little more dangerous and ramshackle. Yeah, they can be. But, they really aren't Harlem dangerous. It's still Paris. You will pay a whole lot less to live here.

Returning to the U.S.

If you have people visit you in the late spring when you've put away your winter duds, send stuff home with them. Every time you see someone from the States send stuff home with them. You will collect a lot of things during those massive sales. Buy a ticket early. Only buy a one-way to Paris unless you find something really cheap. Europe has excellent travel prices. Consider staying for the summer and finding an internship. Tell your landlord when you're leaving three-months in advance to avoid deposit complications. Start selling-off your bigger items early, like your TV. Advise all your accounts of the date you leave. Tie up all your loose ends. Write down all of your friends' permanent information. Get good at keeping in touch. You've met some amazing people.