

T H E H O M E I N D E X

Practical Companion

P A R I S

Vincennes

*The city, the town at its edge,
and what it would mean to live there*

*Vincennes · Levallois-Perret · Boulogne-Billancourt
Saint-Mandé · the 15th*

Vincennes first.

Hoc est opus. Et satis est.

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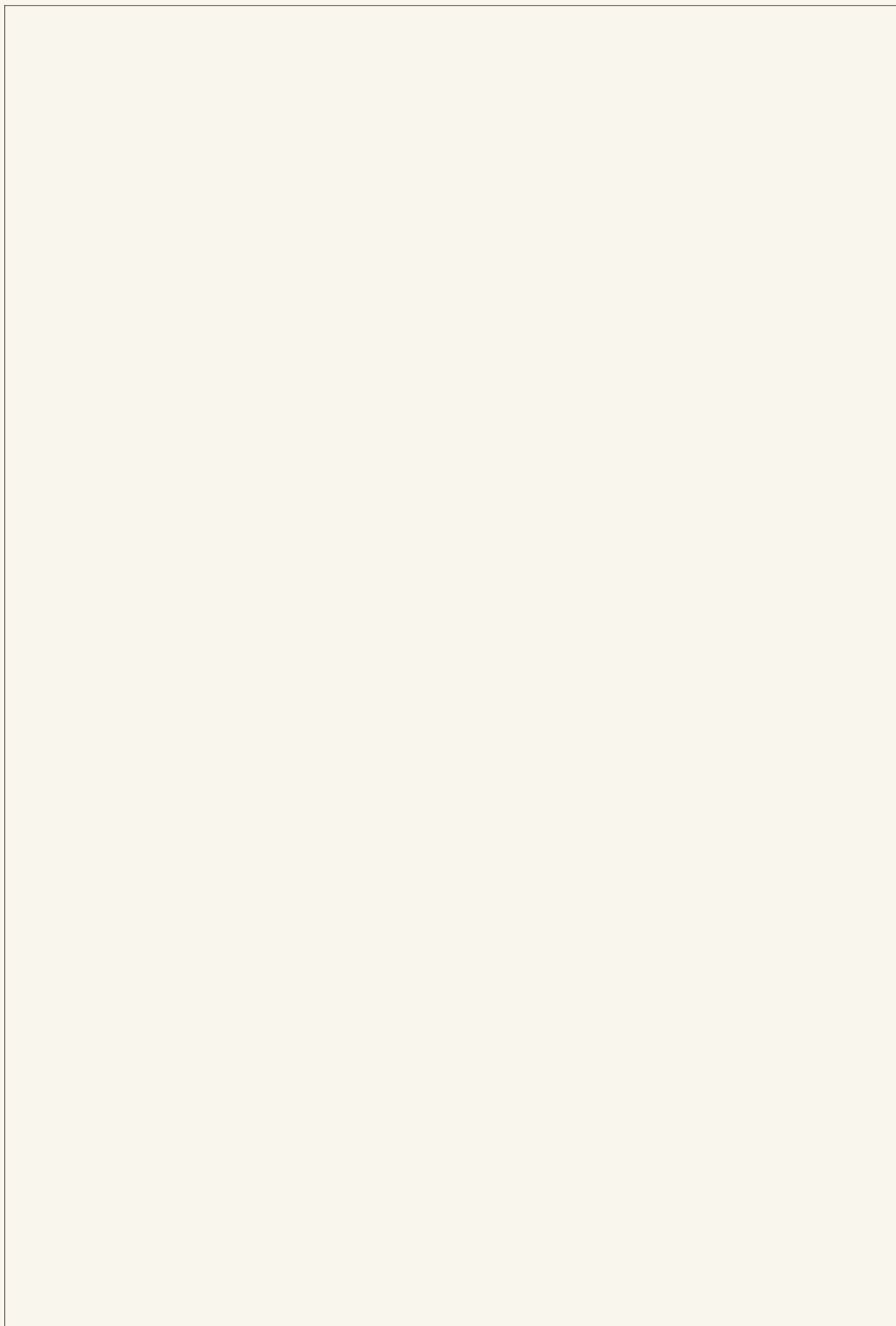
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What This Guide Is For

Almost everything written about Paris is written for people who are leaving again. Three days, five arrondissements, a list of things to have seen. It is written from outside, and it assumes you will go back out.

This is written for a stay of two or three months. Long enough that the difference between visiting and living stops being theoretical. Short enough that you are not emigrating. Long enough to have a bakery; not long enough to have a doctor.

Forty places across greater Paris were examined as answers to one question: *where inside this metropolitan system would we actually live?* **Vincennes finished first**, ahead of Levallois-Perret and Boulogne-Billancourt.

This guide takes that seriously enough to ask what follows. If we really were going to spend those months in Vincennes, what would it be like, and how would we do it well? Which streets, and what kind of apartment, and how would we get one? Where does food come from? Where do we run? How does Paris itself become part of an ordinary week rather than staying a place we visit? What does the journey to La Défense actually cost? And what starts to grate in week seven?

Two things this is not.

It is not tourism. Nothing is named here because it is famous. The Louvre appears only if it does something for a person living in Vincennes on a Tuesday.

And it is not a prescription. This is a judgment made for a particular shape of life: two adults, several months, walking and running daily, good provision, calm, the ability to host. Paris is a within-city decision, and the alternatives are not lesser versions of the winner. They are different Paris lives, and they get real room later.

The reasoning behind the ranking is a short note at the back. The sources sit behind it. Both stay there.

The Paris Question

I · 1

Living Beside Paris

Start with the thing that will feel wrong.

The answer to *where should we live in Paris* turns out not to be in Paris. Vincennes is a commune of the Val-de-Marne, outside the Périphérique, with its own mayor and its own postcode: a small dense square of streets pressed between the eastern edge of the city and a forest.

That looks like a dodge. It is not. It is what the question produces once you stop asking which arrondissement is most Parisian and start asking where an ordinary week goes best.

The distinction is simple.

Paris proper gives you more incidental Paris. You walk home past things. The city arrives unbidden: a street you did not mean to take, a façade at the end of it, the river where you did not expect the river. Over two months that accumulates into something no suburb can manufacture, and for many people it is the entire reason to come.

The edge gives you a more complete ordinary town. Not a smaller version of the city: a different kind of place, with its own market three mornings a week, its own high street, its own church, its own municipal sports grounds, and its own quiet at ten at night. The communes immediately outside the Périphérique are not suburbs in the American sense. They are old towns that Paris grew up to and stopped at.

Both are real. The question is which one two or three months rewards.

Why the edge wins over that length.

A three-day visit is made of incidental Paris. A ten-week stay is made of Tuesdays: the bread, the pharmacy, the run, the evening you did not feel like going anywhere. Incidental Paris is wonderful and it is not what most of your hours consist of.

And because the boundary here is administrative rather than physical, the trade is much smaller than it sounds. Vincennes is about a quarter of an hour from the middle of the city on a line that runs through everything. You are not choosing between Paris and somewhere else. You are choosing which one is the background and which one is the destination.

What you give up. The incidental, in the specific sense above. You will not stumble into the Marais. If that stumbling is the point of your stay, Part Four has an answer for you, and it is a good one.

I · 2

The Answer

Forty places across greater Paris were considered. **Vincennes finished first.**

Not on one spectacular strength. On combining the things a two-month stay repeatedly asks for: safety, calm, and short ordinary errands. Any one of the three is easy to find. All three together are rare.

What makes it more than that is scale. Vincennes is a town of two square kilometres with a genuine high street, a market on three mornings a week, and nine hundred and ninety-five hectares of woodland at its southern edge.

Levallois-Perret came second and **Boulogne-Billancourt** third. Both are closer to central Paris and much closer to La Défense; both are excellent; neither is a town in the way Vincennes is a town. **Saint-Mandé**, immediately next door, is quieter still. And the **15th arrondissement** is the strongest answer for someone who wants to be inside Paris rather than beside it.

All five get proper portraits in Part Four, because on a decision this close the alternatives are the most useful part of the book.

Vincennes

II · 1

The Town

Vincennes is small, dense and prosperous: about two square kilometres, wedged between the Périphérique to the west and the Bois de Vincennes to the south and east. You can walk across it in twenty-five minutes. You cannot get lost in it.

Three things define it.

The château. A medieval royal fortress with the tallest keep in Europe, standing at the town's southern corner where the métro terminates. Not a ruin and not incidental: it anchors the axis that carries the town's commercial life north from it.

The Bois. Nine hundred and ninety-five hectares, created by Napoleon III between 1855 and 1866: the largest public park in Paris, about a tenth of the city's area, roughly three times the size of Central Park. Three lakes, four fitness circuits, a hippodrome, a zoo, a Buddhist pagoda, an arboretum, several stadiums and a working farm.

The town itself, which nobody writes about and which is the reason it wins. Vincennes has an intact high-street economy: butchers, fishmongers, cheesemongers, five serious bakeries within a few hundred metres of each other, four pharmacies, several supermarkets and two markets: inside a footprint you cross on foot. It is bourgeois and busy and not remotely quaint. Ordinary people do ordinary shopping in it every morning.

The shape of the streets.

A grid tilted off true. **Avenue de Paris** runs east–west along the northern edge of the château, carrying the traffic and the métro beneath it. **Rue de Fontenay** and **rue de Montreuil** run parallel to the north. **Avenue du Château** and **rue du Midi** run north–south through the centre and carry most of the shops. The RER station sits in the middle; the métro terminus sits at the corner.

East of the centre, around **place Diderot**, the town is quieter and plainer and has a market of its own. West, toward **Bérault**, it presses against the Périphérique. South, it simply stops and the wood begins.

What it feels like.

A French provincial town that happens to be a short ride from the Louvre. Five or six storeys of stone and brick from the turn of the last century, pavement life that is genuine rather than performed, and a quiet that arrives around ten.

If you have spent time in Paris proper, the first thing you notice is the absence of pressure: no crowd to navigate, no queue, no sense that the street belongs to someone else. The second thing, usually around week three, is that you have stopped going into Paris every day and that this is fine.

II · 2

Where Inside It

Vincennes has three rail stations and they are not evenly distributed. Getting this right is the most consequential practical decision in the book, because the difference between a three-minute walk to the RER and a thirteen-minute one is the difference between using it without thinking and thinking about using it.

Vincennes RER, on line A, sits in the middle of the town: the first stop outside Paris on the network's fastest cross-city line.

Château de Vincennes, the terminus of métro line 1, sits at the southern corner beside the fortress. Being a terminus, trains start there.

Bérault, also line 1, sits on the western edge.

The RER and the métro terminus are about four hundred metres apart on opposite diagonals of the centre, and the town's provision clusters between them. Sit too far west and you buy the RER but lose the métro. Sit too far east and you reverse it.

Where we would live.

The blocks bounded by rue du Midi, avenue du Château, avenue de Paris and rue de Fontenay: centred near where rue du Midi meets rue de l'Église, and excluding frontage on avenue de Paris itself, which carries the traffic that the rest of the town does not.

This is the band we found that best reconciles the two rail modes while keeping the market, a supermarket, the pharmacies and the church inside a few minutes. From it:

Marché Vincennes	2 min	Vincennes RER	3 min
Monoprix	2 min	Château de Vincennes	5 min
Notre-Dame	2 min	The Bois, esplanade	9 min
Nearest pharmacy	under 2 min	Marché Diderot	15 min

Those are the distances this book means whenever it says the market, the station or the wood. They vary by two to four minutes across the band, which changes nothing.

The one number that matters most. The Bois is **nine minutes**, not at the door. Vincennes' housing sits north of the château and the wood begins south of it, so no central address has the forest at the end of the street. Nine minutes is close enough to be habitual and far enough that the distinction matters. It is a warm-up, not a threshold.

Two other parts of town, honestly.

Around Bérault, west. Line 1 at the door, quieter streets, closer to the wood on that side. You give up the market and the central provision, and you are nearer the ring road.

Around place Diderot, east. The least expensive part of Vincennes, with its own market on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and a real walk from everything else: the RER is a quarter of an hour.

What to look for in a listing. Vincennes' better apartments face inward, onto a *cour arborée*, a planted courtyard. In a dense town that is the difference between a quiet flat and a noisy one, and it is worth more than a floor's worth of view.

PART THREE

Living There

III · 1

Home

This is the hardest chapter in the book, and the difficulty is worth stating at the top: **the apartment this life wants is the scarce end of the Vincennes market.** Everything below follows from that.

First, the legal shape.

France's ordinary leases run three years unfurnished and one year furnished. Neither is written for two or three months, and there are three routes that are.

The bail mobilité. A furnished lease of one to ten months, non-renewable, with no security deposit permitted. It is restricted to seven grounds (higher education, professional training, apprenticeship, internship, civic service, professional transfer, or temporary mission in the course of professional activity), and the ground must be written into the lease with documentary proof handed over before signature.

There is no ground for "a residential stay." A couple spending three months in Paris because they want to does not qualify.

But if someone in the household independently satisfies one of those grounds, most plausibly a genuine and evidenced temporary professional assignment, the bail mobilité becomes a normal and useful route, and Vincennes landlords advertise it: listings in the town name it explicitly, often offering it or a classic furnished lease depending on what the tenant can show. If that applies to you, establish it early. It is the route the law built for a stay of exactly this length, and it is the cleanest of the three when the household genuinely qualifies.

Otherwise, do not plan on it.

The classic furnished lease. One year, tacitly renewed, but **the tenant may leave at any time on one month's notice**, which is precisely why it remains relevant for a short stay. It is widely offered here. The practical friction is the landlord's: one who knows you intend to leave in twelve weeks may prefer an applicant who does not.

The short furnished market. Agencies and platforms, priced by the month rather than by the square metre, and correspondingly more expensive. This is the fallback, and it should be priced as such rather than assumed away.

Take French advice before signing. As in Spain, the category you sign under is not cosmetic.

What to look for.

A furnished two-bedroom of roughly fifty-five to seventy square metres. Two bedrooms because of the guests chapter.

Around sixty to sixty-five square metres, current asking evidence suggests **roughly €2,000 a month is plausible**, but the stock is thin enough that a tight market-wide range would be false precision. Larger furnished two-bedrooms rise quickly and may not be available at all when you search. **Do not assume charges are included**; sometimes they are quoted inclusive and sometimes they are not, and it is worth asking rather than inferring.

Priorities, in order: **a lift**, in a town of five- and six-storey buildings where many staircases have none. **Interior aspect**, onto the courtyard rather than the street. **Which station you are actually near**, measured by walking rather than by the listing's claim. And **the heating and what it costs to run**: Paris winters are not severe but they are long and grey, and a badly heated old flat in February is a miserable place to spend a stay.

The availability problem, stated plainly.

Furnished stock in Vincennes is dominated by studios and one-bedrooms. In a snapshot of the market, only a handful of furnished two-bedrooms were visible across the whole commune, and most of the furnished stock sits west toward Bérault and south toward Saint-Mandé rather than in the central band.

There may be periods when nothing suitable is available inside the preferred band at all.

So: a preferred band, and an acceptable fallback.

The band in II.2 is where we would live if the right apartment exists. It remains the recommendation.

If it produces nothing, **widen to a specific listing whose walking geography preserves the life**, not to Vincennes as an undifferentiated commune. A real example from the market: a sixty-four square metre two-bedroom on the western side, three minutes from Bérault and three from the RER, six minutes from rue du Midi and seven from the wood. That trades a few minutes of market access for better access to the Bois, and it keeps everything this book is about. It qualifies.

What does not qualify is an apartment that happens to be in Vincennes and twenty minutes from all of it.

How to search.

Start early. Have the dossier assembled before you look: proof of income, tax notices, identity, and for many landlords a guarantor or a guarantee service. Respond the day a listing appears.

Search by station rather than by commune: *proche RER Vincennes*, *proche métro Bérault*, *proche Château de Vincennes*. That is how the listings describe themselves and it is also what you care about. The French portals carry most of it, and the direct-from-owner platforms list a good deal that agencies do not. For a short stay arranged from abroad, a local agency fee is usually worth paying.

If nothing appears in time, a temporary landing arrangement is a last resort rather than a plan. Over ten or twelve weeks, moving halfway through consumes a real share of the life you came for.

The Week

This is where Vincennes stops being a decision and becomes a place.

Tuesday morning.

The market is on, and it is two minutes away. **Marché Vincennes**, on rue de Fontenay, runs **Tuesday, Friday and Sunday from half past seven until half past one**: a proper French market with fishmongers, cheesemongers, growers, a butcher, flowers and prepared food, and it is the town's social centre for the four hours it exists.

Three mornings a week, two minutes from the door. That is the ordinary provisioning of this life, and it reorganises the week around it: you stop planning food and start buying what is good on the day you are near it.

There is a **second market at place Diderot** on Wednesdays and Saturdays, in the east of the town. It is a good market and it is a quarter of an hour away, which makes it an occasional Saturday rather than part of the weekly rhythm.

The rest of the day.

Bread is not a problem: five serious bakeries within a few hundred metres. The only thing requiring thought in week one is their closing days, which do not coincide: one shuts Mondays, another Wednesdays, another Sundays. The bakery on rue de Fontenay toward the eastern end opens **half past six in the morning until half past eight at night, seven days a week**, and is the reliable one.

The **Monoprix on rue de l'Église**, two minutes away, is the substantial supermarket: eight to ten Monday to Saturday, nine to eight on Sunday, with household goods and clothes upstairs. Beyond it are two Intermarchés on rue de Strasbourg, a G20, and two Franprix open until ten at night, one of them seven days a week. There is also a small grocer on rue de Fontenay running from ten in the morning to two the following morning, which is the sort of thing you never need until the once you do.

Pharmacies.

Four in the centre, the nearest under two minutes. All keep roughly half past eight to eight, Monday to Saturday, and all close on Sunday: **which matters less than it sounds.**

Sundays and public holidays are covered by a **rotating duty rota**, the *pharmacie de garde*, normally operating *à rideau ouvert*: you simply walk in. The town publishes the rota and the regional health service maintains it at **monpharmacien-idf.fr**; you can also ring **3237**. A duty supplement of around five euros applies on Sundays and holidays, partly reimbursed against a prescription.

After eight in the evening and overnight the arrangement changes: the duty pharmacy often works behind a closed shutter, and the town directs you to contact the commissariat on rue Raymond du Temple, who will alert the duty pharmacist. The nearest twenty-four-hour pharmacies are on boulevard Soult, just inside Paris, and in Montreuil.

Learn the 3237 number in week one. It is the whole of what a newcomer needs to know here.

Sunday.

The market runs in the morning. The Monoprix opens at nine. Two bakeries are open. The smaller shops mostly are not.

What actually happens is that the town walks into the Bois, and by eleven the paths around the lakes are full of families and runners and prams. It is one of the pleasanter civic sights in greater Paris.

An ordinary evening.

Dinner at eight, the town quiet by ten. The restaurants are neighbourhood restaurants rather than destinations, mostly along the château axis and around the market. For anything more ambitious you go into Paris, which takes about a quarter of an hour.

That is the shape of it: a town that handles its own week completely, and hands the evening to the city when the evening deserves it.

The Bois

Nine hundred and ninety-five hectares, nine minutes away.

Both halves of that sentence matter. It is an enormous urban forest, about a tenth of the area of Paris and roughly three times the size of Central Park, and it does not begin at your door. Vincennes' housing sits north of the château; the wood begins south of it. **Nine minutes is the warm-up.**

That turns out to be the right distance for most of what the wood is for. Close enough that going is not a decision. Far enough that you notice you have gone somewhere.

What is in it.

Roughly half of it is under trees. Three lakes: **Daumesnil** in the west, **des Minimes** to the north-east, **Saint-Mandé** at the corner. Four outdoor fitness circuits. A hippodrome, a zoo, an arboretum, a working farm, a velodrome, several stadiums. And on the Daumesnil shore the **Pagode de Vincennes**, a former colonial-exposition pavilion holding the largest Buddha statue in Europe, over nine metres including its seat, with a Tibetan temple opposite.

What it is for, residentially.

The daily walk. Out through the southern streets, into trees, around water, back. Half an hour to an hour. This is what makes a dense town liveable.

The long run, which has its own chapter.

The Sunday. Each lake has its own character and its own crowd, and a slow circuit with a stop for coffee is what most of the town does with a Sunday morning.

Being alone. In the middle of the wood on a weekday you can be genuinely unobserved in a way not otherwise available inside the Paris system. That belongs to the Sanctuary chapter.

What it is not.

It is not wild. It is a nineteenth-century designed landscape with roads through it, some of which carry traffic, and the northern and western edges are busy. It is also not *yours* the way a small park is: it belongs to eastern Paris, and on a warm Sunday half of eastern Paris is in it.

Learn one entrance and one loop in the first week. You will use it more than anything else in this book.

III · 4

Training

The map understates the training case. Vincennes has no track in the town itself. What it has instead is a forest at the edge of town and a track inside it, and for a runner that distinction matters less than it first appears.

The track.

Stade Pershing, in the Bois, has a **six-lane athletics track, recently renovated**, inside a multisport complex also carrying football, basketball, volleyball, handball, baseball and rugby. The town's own tourist office states it is **accessible free of charge every day from seven in the morning until ten at night**.

Free, six lanes, fifteen hours a day. For structured training that is close to ideal, and because it sits beyond the wood's edge, the session starts when you leave the flat: you jog there warm, you do the work, you jog home cool.

A track you have to travel to cold is a track you stop using in February. A track you reach as a warm-up is one you keep.

There is a second six-lane track at the **Stade Léo-Lagrange**, part of Vincennes' own municipal sports park near the route de la Pyramide, alongside football pitches, courts and a BMX track. It is municipal and more likely to be programmed for clubs; enquire rather than assume.

The long run.

The wood carries a well-known crossing from **lac Daumesnil to lac des Minimes**: thirteen kilometres and more of continuous running under trees, on paths, without a road crossing that matters. Local routes describe a ten-kilometre loop past Daumesnil, up to the Minimes and back near the lac de Saint-Mandé.

For anything longer, the wood connects west through the **Coulée verte**, the elevated planted railway that runs toward Bastille, which extends the available distance well beyond what the Bois alone offers.

Intervals without a track.

The wood holds **four fitness circuits with fifty-four stations between them**. The **Daumesnil circuit** offers a short loop of about 1.4 kilometres with fourteen stations and a longer one of about 2.1 with eighteen, starting where avenue Daumesnil meets the allée des Lapins and reachable on foot from the town. One experienced local account recommends the short loop specifically for interval work, for people who get bored circling a stadium.

So the week assembles itself. Easy runs in the wood. Long runs across it. Sessions at Pershing when the session is measured. The Daumesnil loop when it is not.

The honest cost. All of it begins with nine minutes of pavement, and Pershing is further. On a wet February morning at half past six that is a real thing. In exchange you have a forest and a free renovated track, and we would take that trade without hesitating.

III · 5

Moving

On foot. The town, entirely. Two square kilometres, flat, gridded. Everything in the chapters above happens on foot.

By RER. The **RER A** from Vincennes station, three minutes away, is the spine of the stay. First stop outside Paris; it reaches **Nation, Gare de Lyon, Châtelet–Les Halles** and **Auber** in a few minutes each, which drops you in the middle of the city faster than many Parisians cross their own.

At rush hour, westbound, it is genuinely full. Off-peak it is superb, and that contrast is worth learning early.

Since 2025 a single Métro–Train–RER ticket covers ordinary journeys across the whole region: no zones to think about for a single trip, airport services excepted. In 2026 it costs €2.55.

By métro. Line 1 runs from the château terminus five minutes away, straight along the historical axis of Paris: Nation, Bastille, Hôtel de Ville, Châtelet, Louvre, Concorde, Champs-Élysées, Étoile, and on to La Défense. It is automated and very frequent, and because Château de Vincennes is a terminus you are boarding a train that is starting its run, which usually means a seat.

Over three months this becomes the real choice: the RER is faster, line 1 is more pleasant, and you will pick the métro more often than the timetable justifies.

By bus and bicycle. The bus network fills the gaps, particularly across to the 12th and down to Saint-Mandé. Vélip' has stations in the town, the Bois has a dedicated cycling loop, and Vincennes is flat.

By car. Do not have one. Parking is difficult and paid, the Périphérique is at the door in the worst sense, and nothing in this book is improved by a car.

Airports. Charles de Gaulle by RER, changing at Châtelet or Gare du Nord; Orly by métro or RER B. Neither is close and both are routine, which is the point, since inside the Paris system airport access is not something a neighbourhood gives or takes away.

III · 6

Paris

Paris is a quarter of an hour away. The question is which parts of it become part of an ordinary week rather than staying places you visit.

What line 1 gives you.

Look at what it passes through, because from Vincennes it is effectively a local service: **Nation, Bastille, the Marais, Hôtel de Ville, Châtelet, Louvre, Tuileries, Concorde, Champs-Élysées, Étoile.** That is the spine of central Paris and you are on the end of it.

The consequence is that the 4th, the 3rd and the 1st are closer to you than most Parisians' neighbourhoods are to each other. An evening in the Marais is a decision made at seven, not a plan.

What becomes ordinary.

Bastille and the 11th, a few minutes up the line: the nearest part of Paris with a real evening, and what you will use for dinner.

The 12th, immediately west, which is an extension rather than a destination: the **marché d'Aligre**, the **Coulée verte**, **Bercy**.

The Marais on a Sunday afternoon, because much of it is open when the rest of Paris is not.

The 5th and the Latin Quarter, for the bookshops and the cinemas: the two things Vincennes genuinely lacks.

What stays a visit. The western arrondissements, Montmartre, the 16th and 17th. Not because they are bad but because from here they are the far side of the city, and over two months you will find you simply do not go.

The residential point.

You will go into Paris most days in week one and perhaps twice a week by week six. That is not disillusionment; it is what happens when a place stops being a destination. Whether the reduction feels like loss or like settling is the real test of whether Vincennes was the right choice, and for most people who like towns, it is settling.

III · 7

Sanctuary

Somewhere to go and simply be: without buying anything, without being greeted, without anyone forming a view about how long you have been there.

Vincennes is unusually good at this, and the reason is structural: it has both kinds of refuge, the enclosed and the open, within a short walk.

Notre-Dame de Vincennes.

Two minutes from the band, on rue Raymond du Temple. **On weekdays the church is open from half past seven in the morning until half past seven at night**, free, with no arrangement required. It is a working parish church rather than a monument, and at weekends its life reorganises around services rather than around open hours.

It is a nineteenth-century building by a *prix de Rome*, begun under the Restoration, with an 1860s organ listed as a historic monument since 1986 and a regional heritage designation on the building. None of that is why it is here. It is here because on an ordinary weekday it is open for twelve hours, it is two minutes from the door, and in the afternoon it is empty. Whatever you believe, an empty parish church is one of the few interiors in the Paris system where sitting still for an hour is structurally expected rather than merely tolerated.

The Bois, off the paths.

Nine minutes to the edge, and then as far in as you care to go. Fifteen minutes past that you are somewhere with nobody in sight: the ground around the lac des Minimes on a weekday morning, or the arboretum, or a bench in the trees between the main routes.

Free, unenclosed, always open. The honest qualification: this works on a weekday. It does not work on a Sunday afternoon.

The cemetery.

Vincennes has its own municipal cemeteries, and French municipal cemeteries are among the most reliably peaceful public spaces in Europe: walled, planted, maintained, and open every day of the week. The commune gives their hours as half past eight to half past five Monday to Saturday, and nine to half past five on Sundays and public holidays.

This is the cold-weather answer, and the weekend one. When the wood is wet and the church is given over to services, the cemetery is open and quiet and nobody will ask you anything.

What is not on this list.

The château, which is ticketed. The Parc Floral, ticketed in season. Every café in Vincennes, which are good and which require a transaction. And the **pagoda**, which is a working place of worship without published public hours: a landmark in the Bois worth knowing about, and not somewhere you can rely on arriving at unannounced and staying an hour.

La Défense

The household may need to be at La Défense, and that requirement is the largest single cost of choosing Vincennes.

The journey: about forty minutes, door to office, direct.

Line 1 runs from Château de Vincennes to La Défense Grande Arche without a change; the RER A does the same, faster, from Vincennes station. Forty minutes is a modelled door-to-office figure: it already includes the walk at both ends and the platform time, which is why it is more useful than a timetable number and why it should not be read as forty minutes sitting on a train.

No interchange is the structural fact underneath it. That is why fifteen kilometres from Vincennes comes out at about the same figure as much shorter journeys from places that require a change.

What it costs.

Forty minutes is the longest journey of any of the strong candidates. Suresnes is about fifteen, Courbevoie twelve, Neuilly fifteen, Levallois twenty-seven, Boulogne thirty-two.

Made frequently, that is between an hour and a half and two hours of the day, and the absence of an interchange does not make that disappear. It does make it a simpler forty minutes than most: one platform, one train, one exit.

We do not know the frequency, and this guide will not invent one:

- **Occasional:** a few times a month, and the journey is a non-issue.
- **Weekly:** an acceptable cost for a better place to live.
- **Daily:** the calculation changes materially, and Part Four's western answer deserves a serious look.

The principle underneath. A short journey to a less good place to live does not make that place better. It makes it nearer.

Having People Come

Two or three months is long enough that people will come.

What the flat needs. Two bedrooms: the reason Home specifies fifty-five to seventy square metres rather than forty-five, and the reason that specification is hard. Over ten days, the difference between a spare room and a sofa is the difference between a good visit and a strained one.

Getting them here. Both airports connect by rail with one change, and a guest reaches Vincennes without a taxi. Tell them in advance, because they will assume otherwise.

What you do with them.

Here is Vincennes' one real weakness as a host, and it is worth naming. What is at your door is a wood and a fortress, not the postcard. The 4th, the 5th, the 6th and the 7th all deliver more Paris per metre than Vincennes ever will.

It matters less than it sounds, for two reasons.

The **château** is genuinely worth a morning: the tallest medieval keep in Europe and a Sainte-Chapelle, with almost none of the crowd the equivalent monument inside Paris would carry.

And your guests came for Paris, which is a quarter of an hour away on a line running through the middle of everything they want. The difference between hosting here and hosting in the 4th is that there they walk out into it and here they take line 1 for fifteen minutes. Over ten days that is a small tax.

What Vincennes gives instead is what visitors to Paris almost never get: a **market morning**, a wood, a quiet dinner in a town where nobody is performing, and a host who is not exhausted.

The pattern that works. Paris in the mornings, back for the afternoon, dinner locally. The Bois on the day everyone needs a rest. The château once. And one long lunch after the Sunday market, which is the thing people remember.

What Grates

Every place has a week seven.

The RER A at rush hour. Superb off-peak, unpleasant westbound between eight and nine. If your days start then, you will take line 1 instead and accept the extra ten minutes.

Nine minutes to the wood. Small and real. On the days you want to walk out of the door into trees, you walk out of the door into a town first. It is the price of being three minutes from the RER, and most weeks it is obviously worth paying.

The Bois on Sundays. From about eleven to five the near parts belong to visitors rather than to you. You learn to go early or go deep.

Not being in Paris. This is the real one. Around week five or six there is a moment: usually triggered by something small, an exhibition you did not go to, an evening that ended early because of the journey home: when the fifteen minutes feel like more than fifteen minutes. For most people it passes. If it does not, that is worth taking seriously rather than arguing with: the 15th may simply be the better answer for the way you want to spend the time.

The bourgeois quiet. Vincennes is comfortable, orderly and a little dull. That is exactly what a two-month stay wants. It is not what you came for if you came for friction.

Finding the flat. This grates before you arrive rather than after, and of everything on this list it is the one most likely to cost you sleep.

The Other Paris Lives

Paris is a within-city decision, and the alternatives are not lesser versions of the winner. Each is the right answer to a different question.

Levallois-Perret

The strongest all-round alternative, and almost the mirror of Vincennes.

Levallois is dense, prosperous and thoroughly modern, on the north-western edge. Where Vincennes gives a town and a forest, Levallois gives **proximity**: closer to central Paris, much closer to La Défense at around twenty-seven minutes, and among the best-connected communes of the ring. Its everyday provision is strong and its streets are safe.

What it does not have is the wood: its green space is real and ordinary, and it does not have the old-town texture that makes Vincennes feel like somewhere rather than like a district.

Choose Levallois if the balance of your life pulls west, if La Défense is frequent, or if you want the shortest distance between a comfortable residential street and the centre of Paris.

Boulogne-Billancourt

Large, prosperous, and the closest thing to Vincennes on the other side of the city.

Boulogne borders the **Bois de Boulogne** along its northern flank, which gives it major green access at the western end of Paris. It is about thirty-two minutes from La Défense, has a substantial cultural life of its own, and is genuinely a town rather than a suburb.

It is also among the dearest in the field, and it is bigger and busier than Vincennes: more of a city's texture, less of a town's.

Choose Boulogne if you want what Vincennes offers but westward, and the additional cost is not decisive.

Saint-Mandé

Vincennes' immediate neighbour. They share a boundary and the same wood.

Saint-Mandé is smaller, quieter, and among the safest places in the whole field. It has the lac de Saint-Mandé, its own market, and métro line 1. Functionally it is Vincennes with the volume down: less commerce, fewer restaurants, a shorter high street, a calmer week.

Choose Saint-Mandé if you looked at Vincennes and wanted it quieter still, and do not mind that some errands will take you into Vincennes anyway.

The In-Paris Answer · the 15th

If Part One's argument does not persuade you: if the incidental Paris is the point, this is the address.

The 15th is the largest arrondissement and the least written-about, which is exactly its qualification. It is residential almost throughout, with low nightlife pressure and a genuine market and commercial density around **Commerce** and **Convention** that rivals anything on the eastern side. It has real running ground: parks, and the car-free Seine bank along its western edge. It sits beside Montparnasse, so the gares are at hand.

What it does not offer is postcard. Of all the good residential arrondissements this is among the least photogenic, and a visitor staying with you will be shown less from the door than almost anywhere else in Paris. Its rail access is oddly uneven for a central arrondissement: it is large, and parts of it are a real walk from a station.

Choose the 15th if you want to be inside Paris rather than beside it, with a genuine neighbourhood week rather than a tourist one, and if you would rather have the city incidental and the quiet deliberate than the other way round.

The Western Answer

There is a group of communes that the residential comparison did not favour and that a La Défense-shaped life would.

Courbevoie at about twelve minutes, **Suresnes** at fifteen, **Neuilly-sur-Seine** at fifteen, **Puteaux** at six. These are where La Défense stops being a journey.

Two are genuinely good places to live independently of that. **Suresnes** sits on the Mont Valérien above the Seine with real views and a tram to the towers, and rated among the best in the field for quality of life. **Courbevoie** is unglamorous and consistently solid, twelve minutes out.

Choose one of these if La Défense is daily. That is the whole condition and it is a sufficient one. Vincennes costs roughly an hour a day more than Suresnes, and no wood is worth an hour a day to everyone.

P A R T F I V E

Verdicts

Where we would live: central Vincennes.

The blocks between rue du Midi and avenue du Château, rue de Fontenay and avenue de Paris, not fronting avenue de Paris itself. Two minutes from the market, three from the RER, five from line 1, nine from the wood.

A furnished two-bedroom of fifty-five to seventy square metres, interior aspect onto a courtyard, with a lift, taken under whichever short-stay instrument the household actually qualifies for. If the band produces nothing, a specific listing further west that keeps the walking geography intact, not Vincennes at large.

We would shop at the market three mornings a week and use the Monoprix for the rest, run in the wood most days and at Pershing when the session needed a track, take line 1 rather than the RER for anything not urgent, and put 3237 in a phone in the first week.

That is our recommendation for the life this guide describes.

Where the answer changes.

If La Défense is a daily requirement. Look west: Courbevoie, Suresnes, Puteaux. Forty minutes each way is defensible weekly and poor daily, and this is the largest single condition in the book.

If the incidental Paris is the point of the stay. The **15th**, accepting a less photogenic address in exchange for being inside the thing rather than beside it.

If you want it quieter than Vincennes. Saint-Mandé, next door, same wood, shorter high street.

If the balance of your life is western. Boulogne-Billancourt, at a higher price.

If the apartment cannot be found in time. Widen the geography before you widen the standard, and prefer a strong near-band listing to a weak central one. Do not plan on moving mid-stay.

These are different questions with different answers. Only the first is ours.

What We Could Not Establish

Things that would change what we tell you.

Whether anyone in the household qualifies for a bail mobilité. The seven statutory grounds are narrow and evidenced, and an ordinary residential stay is not among them. If someone holds one, most plausibly a genuine temporary professional assignment, the route the law built for a stay of this length opens. If not, the strategy shifts to the classic furnished lease or the short furnished market, and the household should budget conservatively until it knows which route a landlord will accept. This is the reader's to resolve and it should be resolved first.

The frequency of the La Défense requirement. We have the journey and not the schedule. Whether Vincennes is the right answer depends on a fact the household holds and we do not.

Things that limit precision without changing the recommendation.

The live rental picture. Our snapshot was indicative rather than a counted inventory. Only a handful of furnished two-bedrooms were visible across the commune, and there may be periods when none is available inside the preferred band. The shape of that finding is durable; the specific listings are not.

Whether charges are included. Sometimes quoted inclusive, sometimes not. Ask.

The residential character street by street. We can say which streets carry shops and which stations are near. We cannot say which residential street is quieter than its neighbour, or where the courtyard stock actually is. Those are walked, not read.

Fine-grained detail on the alternatives. Part Four is written at comparison depth, not at the depth of Part Three, and is not meant to be.

Evidence Register

Organised by section. Establishment details were compiled from a commercial geographical inventory and are accurate to the date of compilation. Distances from the residential band are computed from coordinates at about 75 metres per minute, allowing for the street grid, rather than walked.

1.1 The field and the result. Forty candidates across greater Paris: twenty arrondissements and twenty inner-ring communes, measured on safety, everyday provision, calm, training ground, rail access, places of refuge, private rental capacity and guest-worthy experience. Vincennes first, Levallois-Perret second, Boulogne-Billancourt third, the 15th fourth, Saint-Mand  fifth. *Home Index Operational Workbook, HOME_INDEX_BOARD.*

2.1 The residential band. rue du Midi · avenue du Ch teau · avenue de Paris · rue de Fontenay, excluding avenue de Paris frontage; rough centre at rue du Midi and rue de l' glise. Selected on walking geography against fixed reference points, from five candidate sitings tested. Internal variation corner to corner: 2.1 minutes to the RER, 3.6 to line 1, 3.3 to the market, 3.7 to the Bois. *Home Index micro-siting pass, 2026-09-02.*

2.2 Distances from the band. March  Vincennes 2 min; Monoprix 2; Notre-Dame 2; nearest pharmacy under 2; Vincennes RER 3; Ch teau de Vincennes 5; Bois at the ch teau esplanade 9; March  Diderot 15. *Computed as above from establishment and station coordinates.*

2.3 The Bois de Vincennes. 995 hectares; largest public park in Paris; created 1855–1866 under Napoleon III; about a tenth of the city's area; roughly three times Central Park; about half under trees. *Wikipedia, Bois de Vincennes.*

3.1 Housing law. The *bail mobilit * (loi ELAN 2018; articles 25-12 to 25-18 of the law of 6 July 1989) is a furnished lease of 1–10 months, non-renewable, with security deposit prohibited, restricted to seven grounds evidenced at the lease's taking effect: higher education, professional training, apprenticeship, internship, civic service, professional transfer, temporary mission in the course of professional activity. The ground is a mandatory term of the lease and the supporting document must be provided before signature; a lease taken without a valid ground is requalified as an ordinary furnished tenancy. *Service-Public.fr and practitioner summaries of the cited articles.* The classic furnished lease runs one year with tacit renewal, the tenant able to terminate on one month's notice. *Same.*

3.2 Rental market. Reported rents across the commune approximately €25–30/m² per month; median apartment rent approximately €1,866, middle eighty per cent between approximately €1,060 and €3,505; purchase approximately €8,600–9,250/m². Market consistently described as tight. Tenure approximately 48% owners, 48% renters. *SeLoger; PAP; RealAdvisor; MeilleursAgents; Immobilier-Guide: portal and agency aggregations, indicative rather than official.*

3.3 Live snapshot, 2 September 2026. Furnished stock across the commune roughly 25–50 listings, dominated by studios and one-bedrooms. Two-bedroom furnished visible only as a handful, including a 52 m² F3, a 64 m² T3 with two bedrooms on the western side, and a T3 with two bedrooms at €2,000 per month. Above that, stock jumps to a 95 m² three-bedroom and a four-bedroom loft. Listings name *bail mobilit * and classic furnished lease explicitly, often offering either. Most furnished stock sits west toward B rault and south

toward Saint-Mandé rather than in the central band. *SeLogger; PAP; Logic-Immo; LocService: portal search summaries, indicative, not a counted inventory.*

4.1 Provision. Marché Vincennes, rue de Fontenay: Tuesday, Friday, Sunday 07:30–13:30. Place Diderot market: Wednesday, Saturday 07:30–13:30. Monoprix, 27 rue de l'Église, Mon–Sat 08:00–22:00, Sun 09:00–20:00. Grandpré, 66 rue de Fontenay, 06:30–20:30 seven days. Franprix, 64 avenue de Paris, 08:00–22:00 seven days. Mini Market Alimentaire, 46 rue de Fontenay, 10:00–02:00 seven days. Further supermarkets on rue de Strasbourg, rue Raymond du Temple, rue des Vignerons and rue Defrance. *Establishment inventory.*

4.2 Pharmacies. Four in the centre: 30 and 36 avenue du Château, 23 rue de Montreuil, 17 rue du Midi, approximately 08:00/08:30 to 20:00 Monday to Saturday, closed Sunday. Sunday and public-holiday cover is provided by the rotating *pharmacie de garde*, normally *à rideau ouvert*, published by the commune and by the regional health agency at monpharmacien-idf.fr, with the national number 3237; a duty supplement of about €5 applies, partly reimbursed against a prescription. After 20:00 and overnight the duty pharmacy commonly operates behind a closed shutter and the commune directs enquiries to the commissariat, 23 rue Raymond du Temple. Nearest 24-hour pharmacies: Citypharma, 86 boulevard Soult, Paris 12e; Pharmacie Leader Santé, 26 rue de Paris, Montreuil. *Ville de Vincennes, Pharmacies de garde; ARS Île-de-France, MonPharmacien.*

5.1 Training. Stade Pershing, Bois de Vincennes: six-lane athletics track, recently renovated, in a multisport complex; accessible free of charge daily 07:00–22:00. *Vincennes tourist office; Val-de-Marne tourism board.* The historic 1919 stadium closed in 1960 and should not be confused with the present complex. *Wikipedia, Stade Pershing.* Stade Léo-Lagrange, municipal sports park near the route de la Pyramide: six-lane track, four football pitches, synthetic pitch, courts, BMX track; access arrangements not established. *Ville de Vincennes.* Bois routes: a 13 km crossing from lac Daumesnil to lac des Minimes; a documented 10 km loop; connection westward via the Coulée verte to Bastille. *Ville de Paris; VisuGPX; Jogging-Plus.* Four fitness circuits with fifty-four stations; the Daumesnil circuit offering loops of about 1.4 km (fourteen stations) and 2.1 km (eighteen), reachable on foot from Vincennes, the short loop recommended locally for interval work. *Val-de-Marne tourism board; paris.fr; a personal running site, cited for practical description rather than authority.*

6.1 Transport. Vincennes RER on line A, first stop outside Paris. Métro line 1 at Château de Vincennes (terminus) and Bérault. Since 1 January 2025 a single Métro–Train–RER ticket covers ordinary journeys across Île-de-France, airport services excepted; €2.55 in 2026. *IDFM; establishment inventory.*

7.1 Sanctuary. Église Notre-Dame de Vincennes, 82 rue Raymond du Temple: the parish states the church is open 07:30–19:30 *en semaine* (weekdays), directing weekend visitors to the schedule of celebrations. Free; no arrangement required. **The book claims weekday access only.** Main volume by Jean-Baptiste Lesueur, begun under the Restoration; organ of about 1860 listed as a *monument historique* since 1986; building carries the *Patrimoine d'intérêt régional* label. *Establishment inventory; Paroisse Notre-Dame de Vincennes; Ville de Vincennes.* Cimetières de Vincennes (ancien and nouveau): open 08:30–17:30 Monday to Saturday and 09:00–17:30 Sundays and public holidays. *Ville de Vincennes.*

7.2 Not certified. Pagode du bois de Vincennes: seat of the Institut international bouddhique, in a former 1931 Colonial Exposition pavilion; largest Buddha statue in Europe at over nine metres including its seat; relics since 2008; Tibetan temple Kagyu-Dzong opposite. **No published public opening schedule was established; it is not offered as a sanctuary under this book's test.** *Wikipedia, Pagode de Vincennes.*

8.1 La Défense. From Vincennes: approximately 41 minutes, 15.4 km, zero transfers. The figure is a **modelled door-to-office journey**: walk, plus ride at 2 minutes per kilometre, plus 10 minutes per interchange, plus about

9 minutes overhead, calibrated against known journeys, and is not a scheduled in-train time. Comparatives: Puteaux 6, Courbevoie 12, Suresnes 15, Neuilly 15, Levallois 27, Boulogne 32, Saint-Mandé 39. *Home Index Operational Workbook, La Défense scenario and overlay sheets. The overlay is conditional and descriptive and ranks nothing.*

9.1 Part Four. Levallois-Perret, Boulogne-Billancourt, the 15th and Saint-Mandé are the alternatives printed here; Saint-Mandé leads the field on safety. The 15th's characterisation (residential quiet, low nightlife pressure, commercial density around Commerce and Convention, car-free Seine-bank running, proximity to Montparnasse, and least postcard per metre) is drawn from the superseded Greater Paris instrument's per-criterion rationale and is used as description rather than as a current placement. Journey times to La Défense for the western communes are carried at 8.1. *Home Index Operational Workbook; GPVI v1.1.*

Characterisations of the alternatives' street life and residential texture are written at comparison depth rather than from guide-level investigation.

Method Note

Forty candidates across greater Paris were examined for the residential question. Vincennes finished first, Levallois-Perret second and Boulogne-Billancourt third.

The ranking selected the subject of this guide. It did not write it.

The chapters above begin from the winning place and ask a different question: what would actually living there require? Where practical evidence remains uncertain, the text says so.

Colophon

The Home Index · Practical Companion

Paris: Vincennes

First edition.

Set in EB Garamond, with IBM Plex Mono.

Research and text: the Home Index.

Errors are ours; corrections are welcome and will be carried into subsequent editions.

Hoc est opus. Et satis est.