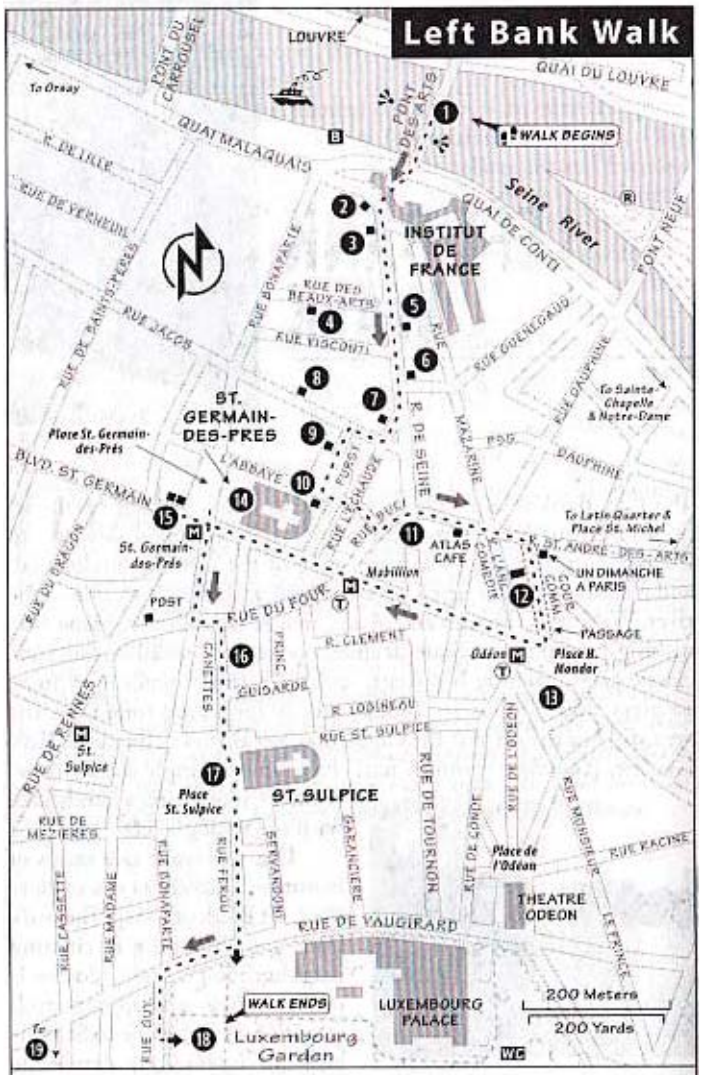

1. Pont des Arts
2. Statue of Voltaire
3. Roger-Viollet Shop
4. Oscar Wilde's Hotel
5. George Sand's House
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15. Les Deux Magots Café & Le Café de Flore
16. Rue des Canettes
17. St. Sulpice
18. Luxembourg Garden
19. To Rue Vavin Cafés La Coupole & Le Select

The Walk Begins

• Start on the pedestrian-only bridge across the Seine, the Pont des Arts (next to Louvre, Mo: Pont Neuf or Louvre-Rivoli).

❶ Pont des Arts

Before dozens of bridges crossed the Seine, the two riverbanks were like different cities—royalty on the right bank, commoners on the left. Today this link offers one of the most captivating views in Paris.

This bridge has always been pedestrian only...and long a popular meeting point for lovers. For years, romantic couples wrote their names on a padlock, "locked" their love forever to the bridge, and tossed the key in the Seine. Unromantic city engineers became worried that the heavy locks were jeopardizing the bridge's structural integrity (a whole panel fell into the Seine in 2015), and newly installed glass panels now make this show of devotion impossible. The city is advising disappointed lovers to take selfies kissing in front of the bridge's railings instead.

The Pont des Arts leads to the domed Institut de France building, where 40 linguists meet periodically to decide whether it's acceptable to call email *"le mail"* (as the French commonly do), or whether it should be the French word *courriel* (which linguists prefer). The Académie Française, dedicated to halting the erosion of French culture, is wary of new French terms with strangely foreign sounds—like *le week-end, le marketing, le fast-food,* and *c'est cool.*

Besides the Académie Française, the Institut houses several other Académies, such as the Académie des Beaux-Arts, which is dedicated to subjects appropriate for the Left Bank, such as music and painting.

• Leave the bridge and cross the busy street. Angle toward the right side of

the Institut de France and walk through the passageway near #27. Once on the other side of the Institut, you're met by a statue in a street-corner garden.

❷ Statue of Voltaire

"Jesus committed suicide." The mischievous philosopher Voltaire could scandalize a party with a wicked comment like that, delivered with an enigmatic smile and a twinkle in his eye (meaning if Christ is truly God, he could have prevented his crucifixion). Voltaire—a commoner more sophisticated than the royalty who lived across the river—introduces us to the Left Bank.

Born François-Marie Arouet (1694-1778), he took up "Voltaire" as his one-word pen name. Although Voltaire mingled with aristocrats, he was constantly in trouble for questioning the ruling class and for fueling ideas that would soon spark a revolution. He did 11 months in the Bastille prison, then spent 40 years in virtual exile from his beloved Paris. Returning as an old man, he got a hero's welcome so surprising it killed him.

• From here we'll head south down Rue de Seine to Boulevard St. Germain, making a few detours along the way. The first stop is a blue storefront at 6 Rue de Seine.

❸ Roger-Viollet

Look in the windows at black-and-white photos of Paris' storied past. The display changes often, but you might see a half-built Eiffel Tower, glitterati of yesteryear (Colette, Simone de Beauvoir, Jean Cocteau), Hitler in Paris, and so on. Many more photos are tucked away inside the binders lining the walls, labeled alphabetically. This humble shop is the funky origin of a worldwide press agency (similar to Getty Images) dealing in historic photographs. The family of photographer Henri Roger expanded his photographs into an archive of millions of photos, chronicling Paris' changes through the years. (If you want a print of a photo you see, don't disturb the staff—order it at www.parisenimages.fr.)

• Continue down Rue de Seine, which cuts through a neighborhood of art galleries and upscale shops selling lamps, sconces, vases, bowls, and statues for people who turn their living rooms into art.

At the first intersection, a half-block detour to the right leads to ❹ ***Oscar Wilde's hotel*** *(#13), where he died in 1900. The sight itself is*

Wilde in the Left Bank

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), the Irish playwright with the flamboyant clothes and outrageous wit, died in a Left Bank hotel on November 30, 1900 (don't blame the current owners).

Just five years earlier, he'd been at his peak. He had several plays running simultaneously in London's West End and had returned to London triumphant from a lecture tour through America. Then news of his love affair with a lord leaked out, causing a scandal, and he was sentenced to two years in prison for "gross indecency." Wilde's wife abandoned him, refusing to let him see their children again.

After his prison term, a poor and broken Wilde was exiled to Paris, where he succumbed to an ear infection and died in a (then) shabby hotel room. Among his last words in the run-down place were: "Either this wallpaper goes, or I do."

Wilde is buried in Paris (📖 see the Père Lachaise Cemetery Tour).

hardly worth the walk there, but the story of how Wilde ended up here is fascinating (see the sidebar).

Continuing along Rue de Seine, a plaque at #31 marks...

❺ George Sand's House

In 1831 George Sand (1804-1876) left her husband and two children and moved into this apartment, determined to become a writer. During the year she lived here, she wrote articles for *Le Figaro* while turning her real-life experiences with men into a sensational novel, *Indiana*, which made her a celebrity and allowed her to afford a better apartment.

George Sand is known for her novels, her cross-dressing (men's suits, slicked-down hair, cigars—and trading in her married name, Amantine-Lucile-Aurore Dudevant, for a man's name), and for her complex love affair with a sensitive pianist from Poland, Frédéric Chopin.

• *At 43 Rue de Seine is...*

❻ Café la Palette

Though less famous than more historic cafés, this is a "real" one, where a *café crème*, beer, or glass of wine at an outdoor table is not outrageous. It's one café where I prefer sitting inside—the 100-year-old, tobacco-stained wood paneling and faded Art Nouveau decor lend an ambience of Left Bank cool. Toulouse-Lautrec would have liked it here. Have something to drink at the bar, admire your surroundings, and snoop about the place—notice the artist palettes above the bar. Nothing seems to have changed since it was built in

1903, except the modern espresso machine (open daily, tel. 01 43 26 68 15).

• At the fork, veer right down small Rue de l'Echaudé. Four doors up, at 6 Rue de l'Echaudé, is a...

❼ Toy Store *(Jouets)*

French and American kids share many of the same toys and storybook characters: Babar the Elephant, Maisy Mouse, Tintin, the Smurfs, Madeline, Asterix, and the Little Prince. This store features figurines of these and other whimsical folk.

In *The Little Prince* (1943), written by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, a pilot crashes in the Sahara, where a mysterious little prince takes him to various planets, teaching him about life from a child's wise perspective.

In his actual life, "Saint-Ex" (1900-1944) was indeed a daring aviator who had survived wrecks in the Sahara. After France fell to the Nazis, he fled to America, where he wrote and published *The Little Prince*. He returned to Europe, then disappeared while flying a spy mission for the Allies. Lost for six decades, his plane was finally found off the coast of Marseille. The cause of the crash remains a mystery, part of a legend as enduring in France as Amelia Earhart's is in the US.

• At the intersection with Rue Jacob, a half-block detour to the right leads to #14.

❽ Richard Wagner's House

Having survived a storm at sea on the way here, the young German composer (1813-1883) spent the gray winter of 1841-1842 in Paris in this building writing *The Flying Dutchman*, an opera about a ghost ship. It was the restless young man's lowest point of poverty. Six months later, a German company staged his first opera *(Rienzi)*, plucking him from obscurity and leading to a production of *The Flying Dutchman* that launched his career.

Now the premises are occupied by a trendy boutique.

• Backtrack a few steps along Rue Jacob, then turn right and continue south on Rue de Furstenberg to a tiny, pleasant, tree-bordered square. At #6 is the...

❾ Delacroix Museum

The painter Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) lived here on this peaceful square. Today, his home is a bite-sized museum with paintings and memorabilia. It's a delightful detour for his fans, skippable for most, and free with the Museum Pass (good WC, see listing on page 67).

Delacroix lived a full and successful life. An ambassador's son, he studied at the Beaux-Arts (which we saw earlier) and exhib-

Art Galleries

You'll see many arts-oriented shops in this vibrant neighborhood. There are fine-art galleries selling paintings and statues, art-supply stores, antique dealers, and chic boutiques for the latest in interior design.

Paris' art scene thrives. In the 20th century, the city attracted many of the foreigners (Picasso, Chagall, Modigliani) who pioneered modern art. Artists here still get respect not always given to artists in the States ("So you're an artist, huh? And what's your real job?"). Paris remains a clearinghouse of creative ideas...and fine art is big business, too. Lots of money passes through this city. Oil-rich sultans come here looking for trendy new works to hang over their sofas back home. Museum curators from America troll these Left Bank streets, taking notes on what's hot. In general, people with money come to Paris on vacation to enjoy the finer things in life. If they come across something they love, they pull out their plastic and make it their own. An impulse buy can gladden the hearts of these gallery owners. Paris is the one city in the world where art supply does not necessarily outstrip art demand.

You're welcome to window shop or enter the galleries. Remember the niceties of shopping in Paris. Always say, *"Bonjour, Madame"* (or *Mademoiselle* or *Monsieur*) when entering, and *"Au revoir, Madame"* (or *Mademoiselle* or *Monsieur*) when leaving. *"Je regarde"* means "I'm just looking." *"Je voudrais acheter"* means "I would like to buy." The reality is that most clerks speak English and are happy to help or to let you browse. If you stroll neighborhoods in the evening, you're likely to pass what looks like a cocktail party spilling out of an art gallery. These "art openings," called *vernissages*, are sometimes private, though usually open to the public (even Americans). Be bold and join the party if you come across one.

ited at the Salon. His *Liberty Leading the People* (1831) was an instant classic, a symbol of French democracy. Trips to North Africa added exotic Muslim elements to his palette. He hobnobbed with aristocrats and bohemians like George Sand and Frédéric Chopin (whom he painted). He painted large-scale murals for the Louvre, Hôtel de Ville, and Luxembourg Palace. In 1857, nearing 60 and in failing health, Delacroix moved in here. He was seeking a quiet home/studio where he could concentrate on his final great works for the Church of St. Sulpice (which we'll see later).

• *Continue uphill as Rue de Furstenberg runs directly into* ⓫ ***Abbey Mansion.*** *This building (1586) was the administrative center for the vast complex of monks gathered around the nearby church of St. Germain-des-Prés. Today, it's a Catholic school.*

Facing the Abbey Mansion, turn left on Rue de l'Abbaye and start working your way east. Along the way is a wine shop, at 6 Rue de Bour-

bon-Le-Château, called La Dernière Goutte—"The Last Drop." They welcome both connoisseurs and yokels for an unsnooty look at France's viniculture (tastings listed on chalkboard). At the T-intersection with Rue de Buci, turn left. You've arrived at what is, arguably, the geographical (if not spiritual)...

⓫ Heart of the Left Bank

Explore. Rue de Buci is perennially busy hosting *pâtisseries* and a produce market by day and bars by night. Mixing earthiness and elegance, it's a quintessential Left Bank scene.

• *Continue east through the café cauldron of Rue de Buci, which crosses a busy five-corner intersection and becomes Rue St. André-des-Arts. Notice the tall wood beams that pierce the roof of the Atlas Café while keeping the wall behind upright. That's the Left Bank "look." Cross Rue de l'Ancienne Comédie and soon turn right into the covered passageway called Cour du Commerce St. André. Stroll a half-block down this colorful alleyway, past shops and enticing eateries. On your right, you'll pass the back door of...*

⓬ Café le Procope

Founded in 1686, Le Procope is one of the world's oldest continuously operating restaurants, and was one of Europe's first places to sample an exotic new stimulant—coffee—recently imported from the Muslim culture.

In the 1700s, Le Procope caffeinated the Revolution. Voltaire reportedly drank 30 cups a day, fueling his intellectual passion. Benjamin Franklin recounted war stories about America's Revolution. Robespierre, Danton, and Marat plotted coups over cups of double-short soy mochaccinos. And a young lieutenant named Napoleon Bonaparte ran up a tab he never paid. See portraits of some of the café's most famous regulars in the windows.

Located midway between university students, royalty, and the counterculture Comédie Française, Le Procope attracted literary types who loved the free newspapers, writing paper, and quill pens. Today, the one-time coffeehouse is a full-service restaurant (affordable if mediocre *menus*, open daily). If you're interested in a meal surrounded by memorabilia-plastered walls (and tourists), enter through the red-draped opening.

Across the lane, at #6, is Un Dimanche à Paris, with its open kitchen and gourmet chocolate creations too beautiful to eat.

• Continue down the cobbled lane until it spills out onto Boulevard St. Germain at an intersection (and Métro stop) called Odéon.

⓮ Odéon Cinemas

When night falls, the neon signs buzz to life, and Paris' many lovers of film converge here for the latest releases at several multiplexes in the area.

• Cross Rue de l'Ancienne Comédie to the right. Looking south up Rue de l'Odéon as you cross, notice the classical columns of the front of the Théâtre de l'Odéon, the descendant of the original Comédie Française (now housed in the Palais Royal). Continue walking west along busy Boulevard St. Germain for six blocks, passing Café Vagenande (famous for its plush Art Nouveau interior) and other fashionable, noisy cafés with outdoor terraces. You'll reach the large stone church and square of...

⓯ St. Germain-des-Prés

Paris' oldest church, dating from the 11th century (the square bell tower is original), stands on a site where a Christian church has stood since the fall of Rome. (The first church was destroyed by Vikings in the 885-886 siege.)

The restored interior is still painted in the medieval manner, like Notre-Dame (and others). The church is Romanesque, with round—not pointed—arches over the aisles of the nave.

The square outside is one of Paris' great gathering spots on warm evenings. The church is often lit up and open late.

• Note that Métro stop St. Germain-des-Prés is here, and the Mabillon stop is just a couple of blocks east. On Place St. Germain-des-Prés, you'll find two venerable cafés—once meccas of creative coffee drinking, today just filled with tourists and milking their fabled past.

⓰ Les Deux Magots Café and Le Café de Flore

Since opening in 1885, "The Two Chinamen Café" (wooden statues inside) has taken over from Le Procope as the café of ideas. From Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism (1900) to Picasso's Cubism (1910s) to Hemingway's spare prose (1920s) to Sartre's Existentialism (with Simone de Beauvoir and Albert Camus, 1940s and '50s) to rock singer Jim Morrison (early 1970s), worldwide movements have been born in the simple atmosphere of these two cafés. Le Café de Flore, once frequented by Picasso, is more hip, but Deux Magots is more inviting for just coffee. Across the street is Brasserie Lipp, a classic brasserie where Hemingway wrote much of *A Farewell to Arms* (see also "Les Grands Cafés de Paris," on page 452).

• From the Church of St. Germain-des-Prés, cross Boulevard St. Germain and head south on Rue Bonaparte (walking past BNP Paribas bank). Jog left on Rue du Four, then right on...

⓰ Rue des Canettes

Small, mid-priced restaurants, bars, and comfortable brewpubs make the streets in this area a popular nightspot for Parisians. Chez Georges (at #11) is the last outpost of funkiness (and how!) in an increasingly gentrified neighborhood. Georges stays up very late, so you won't find much action here until the afternoon.

• *Continue south on Rue des Canettes to the church of...*

⓱ St. Sulpice

The impressive Neoclassical arcaded facade, with two round, half-finished towers, is modeled on St. Paul's in London. It has a remarkable organ and offers Sunday-morning recitals. The lone café on the square in front (Café de la Mairie) is always lively and perfectly located for a break.

Inside, circle the church counterclockwise, making a few stops. In the first chapel on the right, find **Delacroix's three murals** (on the chapel's ceiling and walls) of fighting angels, completed during his final years while he was fighting a lengthy illness. They sum up his long career, from Renaissance/Baroque roots to furious Romanticism to proto-Impressionism.

The most famous is the agitated *Jacob Wrestling the Angel.* The two grapple in a leafy wood that echoes the wrestlers' rippling energy. Jacob fights the angel to a standstill, bringing him a well-earned blessing for his ordeal. Figures to the right of the tree roots include the shepherd Laban and his daughter Rachel (Jacob's future wife). Get close and notice the thick brushwork that influenced the next generation of Impressionists—each leaf is a single brushstroke, often smudging two different colors in a single stroke. The "black" of the piled clothes in the foreground—notice the French flag among them—is built from rough strokes of purple, green, and white. (Too much glare? Take a couple of steps to the right to view it.

On the opposite wall, *Heliodorus Chased from the Temple* has the smooth, seamless brushwork of Delacroix's prime. After Syrian Heliodorus has killed the king and launched a coup, he has entered the sacred Jewish Temple in Jerusalem trying to steal the treasure. Angry angels launch themselves at him, sending him sprawling. The vibrant, clashing colors, swirling composition, and over-the-top subject are trademark Delacroix Romanticism. On the ceiling, *The Archangel Michael* drives demons from heaven.

Walking up the right side of the church, pause at the **fourth chapel,** with a statue of Joan of Arc and wall plaques listing hun-

dreds upon hundreds of names. These are France's WWI dead—from this congregation alone.

In the chapel at the far end of the church, ponder the cryptic symbolism of Mary and Child lit by a sunburst, standing on an orb, and trampling a snake, while a stone cloud tumbles down to a sacrificial lamb.

Continue around the church. On the wall of the north transept is an Egyptian-style obelisk used as a **gnomon**, or part of a sundial. At Christmas Mass, the sun shines into the church through a tiny hole—it's opposite the obelisk, high up on the south wall (in the upper-right window pane). The sunbeam strikes a mark on the obelisk that indicates the winter solstice. Then, week by week, the sunbeam moves down the obelisk and across the bronze rod in the floor, until, at midsummer, the sun lights up the area near the altar. (For a while, this corner of the church was busy with fans of *The Da Vinci Code*.)

In the final chapel before the exit, you should see on display a copy of the **Shroud of Turin** (the original is in Turin, Italy). This famed burial cloth is purported to have wrapped the body of Christ, who left it with a mysterious, holy stain of his image.

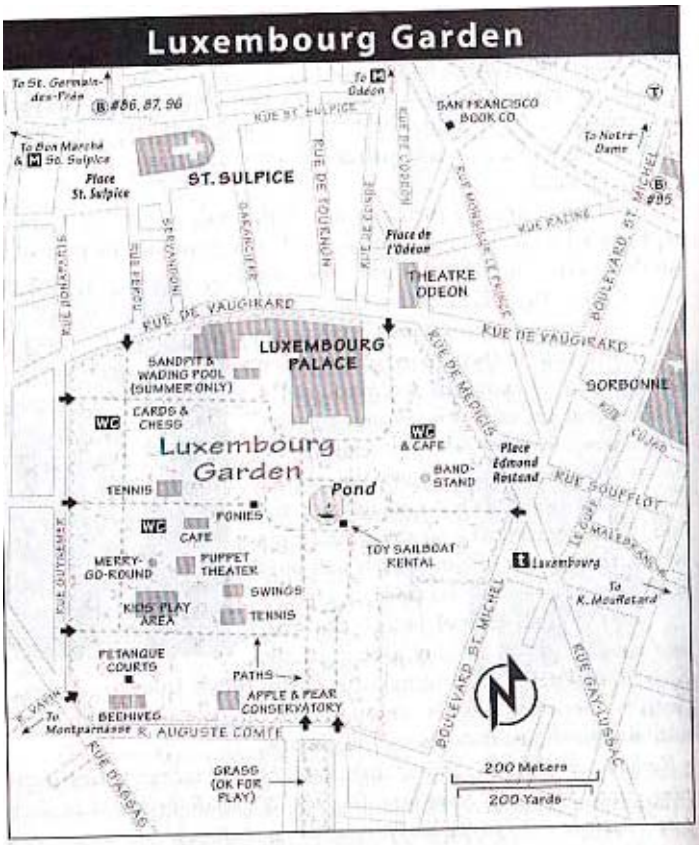
• *Back out on Place St. Sulpice, take note that several interesting shopping streets branch off from here. (See the "Sèvres-Babylone to St. Sulpice" boutique stroll in the Shopping in Paris chapter.)*

To complete this walk, turn left out of the church and continue south on Rue Henry de Jouvenel, which soon turns into Rue Férou and takes you directly to Luxembourg Garden. You'll pass a ***wall inscribed with a quotation*** *from one of France's most famous poems,* "Le Bateau Ivre," *by Arthur Rimbaud (1854–1891). He describes the feeling of drifting along aimlessly, like a drunken boat:* "Comme je descendais... *As I floated down calm rivers, I could no longer feel the control of my handlers...*"

Drift along to Luxembourg Garden. If the gate ahead of you is closed, circle to the right around the fence until you find an open entrance.

Luxembourg Garden

Paris' most interesting and enjoyable garden/park/recreational area, le Jardin du Luxembourg is a great place to watch Parisians at rest and play. This 60-acre garden, dotted with fountains and statues, is the property of the French Senate, which meets here in the Luxembourg Palace. Although it seems like something out of a movie, it's a fact that France's secret service *(Générale de la Sécurité*



Extérieure) is "secretly" headquartered beneath Luxembourg Garden. (Don't tell anyone.)

The palace was created in 1615 by Marie de Médici. Recently widowed (by Henry IV) and homesick for Florence, she built the palace as a re-creation of her girlhood home, the Pitti Palace. When her son grew to be Louis XIII, he drove his mother from the palace, exiling her to Germany.

Luxembourg Garden has special rules governing its use (for example, where cards can be played, where dogs can be walked, where joggers can run, and when and where music can be played). The brilliant flower beds are completely changed three times a year, and the boxed trees are brought out of the *orangerie* in May. In the

southwest corner of the gardens, you can see beehives that have been here since 1872. Honey is made here for the *orangerie*. Close by, check out the apple and pear conservatory, with more than 600 varieties of fruit trees.

Children enjoy the rentable toy sailboats and other kid activities. You'll find marionette shows several times weekly (Les Guignols, like Punch and Judy; described more fully on page 464). Pony rides are available from April through October. (And meanwhile, the French CIA keeps plotting.)

Challenge the card and chess players to a game (near the tennis courts), or find a free chair near the main pond and take a well-deserved break, here at the end of our walk.

• *Nearby: The grand Neo-classical-domed Panthéon, now a mausoleum housing the tombs of great French notables, is three blocks away and worth touring (see page 71). The historic cafés of Montparnasse—* ⓯ ***La Coupole*** *and* ***Le Select****—are a few blocks from the southwest-corner exit of the park (down Rue Vavin, listed under "Les Grands Cafés de Paris" in the Eating in Paris chapter). Luxembourg Garden is ringed with Métro stops (all a 10-minute walk away).*