# A Love Letter to Paris: My Third Homecoming

A travelogue set in my third visit to Paris

There is something oddly comforting about going back to the place you were born, even if you do not remember it. Paris has always felt like a name from a fairy tale to me whispered during bedtime stories, mentioned in family photo albums, and occasionally scribbled on official documents under "Place of Birth". This was my third time visiting, but somehow it still felt like the first. Maybe because each time, I discovered a different version of the same city. This visit, short and sweet, was no different.

Our journey began in Germany, where we were wrapping up a beautiful winter trip. We boarded a train from Karlsruhe to Paris, excited and slightly sleep-deprived. The journey was smooth, scenic, and surprisingly peaceful, given that my brother and I were practically vibrating with excitement. As the fields blurred past and the train sliced through little towns and hills, I imagined Paris at the other end, arms open, ready to welcome us back.

We arrived at our Airbnb in the late afternoon. The apartment was small but cozy, with slanted attic windows and furniture that had clearly seen many guests. But nothing could top what we found in the living room: a PlayStation 4. My brother and I looked at each other like we had discovered buried treasure. We raced to the controller, completely ignoring our luggage, Paris, and even food. In our defense, it was the first time either of us had touched a PS4. Our parents gave us an amused side-eye and let us have our moment.

Eventually, hunger won. We headed to a nearby grocery store—a tiny but charming one tucked between a bakery and a bookstore. We filled our basket with salad bowls, fresh bread, cheese, and a few too many chocolate bars. Lunch was simple, but after a long journey and several hours of digital football and racing games, it felt like a feast. We lounged around the apartment for a bit, recharging for our evening adventure.

As evening fell, we decided to walk to the Basilica of the Sacré-Cœur in Montmartre. Now, Montmartre is famous for many things—its artistic past, cobblestone streets, and the views. What it should be famous for is its surprisingly brutal uphill climb. It was as if Paris had suddenly decided to turn into a hiking trail.

But the climb had its perks. The narrow streets were lined with souvenir stalls that seemed to appear just when we needed to catch our breath. My mother, the undisputed queen of souvenir hunting, was in her element. She picked up keychains, postcards, and a beautiful ceramic plate with Paris painted on it, which still is showcased in our living room back home.

The basilica itself was stunning. Its white domes glowed softly under the evening sky. We explored the interiors, where a peaceful mass was being held. The atmosphere was calm and reverent, and for a moment, even my usually restless brother stood quietly. We sat through a mass service, which, though entirely in French, managed to feel comforting and familiar. Maybe it was the music. Or maybe it was just Paris doing what Paris does—making everything feel a bit more special. After the mass, we stepped outside just in time to see the Eiffel Tower light up in the distance. It sparkled like it knew we were watching. It looked unreal, like someone had

photoshopped it into the night sky. We stood there in awe, letting the cold air nip at our cheeks while the city lights blinked and shimmered around us.

We bought small locks from a vendor nearby and wrote our names on them. Then we clipped them onto the railings and tossed the keys away. It was our little secret pact with the city, a memory locked into place.

The next day was one I had been looking forward to for months - our trip to Disneyland Paris. A place where I meet my heroes. I do not care how old you are, there is something undeniably magical about Disneyland. The excitement begins the moment you see the gates. Inside, it was like someone had cracked open a storybook and let all the characters loose.

We met Mickey Mouse, Pluto, Goofy, Tinker Bell, and several other characters who made me feel six years old again. I collected autographs like a detective collecting clues. I still have that autograph book, tucked safely in my drawer like a treasure map. We spent the entire day hopping from ride to ride. There were roller coasters that made us scream, haunted houses that made us scream, and gentle boat rides that gave our legs a break.
Come on you can finish the lyrics
It's a world of laughter
A world of tears
It's a world of hopes
And a world of fears…

Our feet were sore, our faces sun-kissed despite the chill, and our hearts completely full. Even my parents, who are usually more interested in museums than magic castles, admitted that they had a lot of fun.

On our final full day, we decided to explore the fashionable side of Paris. Shopping in the city is an experience all on its own. The stores are elegant, the displays are practically art, and the mannequins somehow look more judgmental than helpful. We roamed through boutiques, picked up souvenirs, and tried on things we had no intention of buying just for the fun of it.

In the afternoon, we went to the Tour Montparnasse, a skyscraper with fifty-three floors. The elevator ride was so fast it made our ears pop, but the view from the rooftop was worth it. Paris stretched out endlessly in every direction. The Eiffel Tower stood proudly in the distance, and the Seine wound its way like a ribbon through the city. And directly below us was something none of us expected: an enormous cemetery. It was eerie and oddly poetic. Life and death, beauty and stillness, all visible from one glass-paneled rooftop.

That evening, we hopped on a double-decker bus to explore more of the city. The open top gave us a perfect view of Paris at night. Lights glittered from cafes and shop windows. We ate too many pastries, tried foods with names I still cannot pronounce, and laughed until our cheeks hurt.

And then, like all good things, it came to an end. The next morning was quiet. We packed slowly, trying to drag out the final moments. Saying goodbye to Paris was not easy. The city may not remember me, but I will always remember it. I was born here, after all. It is stitched into my story, into the rhythm of who I am.

As we boarded our train, Paris slowly disappeared behind us. It didn't wave, didn't cry. But somehow, I knew it would wait for us. That's the thing about cities you love—they never really let you go.

Even now, whenever someone says the word "Paris," my heart does a little somersault. It is not just a place on a map for me. It is where I began, where I've returned, and where I hope to return again and again.

Because no matter how short the trip, Paris always finds a way to stay with you.

This third visit reminded me that some places are not just places. They are part of your roots. Part of your map. And Paris will always be that for me—a city of light, laughter, and homecomings.