

As a second-year student, I had the opportunity to spend my spring semester abroad in Paris, France, studying international affairs at Sciences Po Paris. During my time in this city, I was able to learn and take advantage of the sustainability practices that are deeply embedded in Parisian life.

France, like many European countries, is not new to embedding sustainability policies that are more combative than those in the United States. One striking difference from the United States is the more frequent use of recyclable materials in everyday items. For example, Starbucks, a popular chain both in America and Europe, uses cardboard cups for all beverages (including cold!), which can be easily disposed of in recycling bins. Additionally, straws provided in restaurants and cafes are typically made of cardboard. While this is a hassle at times when they disintegrate quickly, it highlights a significant cultural shift toward sustainability, even in small, everyday choices. Personally, I found it helpful to carry a reusable metal straw, which was a convenient and eco-friendly alternative.

Another noticeable practice in France is the type of bottle caps that all disposable bottles must have according to French laws. These caps are attached to the bottle, so when disposing, the bottle caps do not separate from them. This minimizes littering and promotes better recycling. This might seem minor but aligns with the overall sustainability goals of the country. It's also common for French people to carry smaller water bottles, but I recommend sticking with a reusable water bottle to avoid purchasing single-use plastic bottles.

Traveling within Europe can often lead to a choice between convenience and sustainability. While airfare might appear cheaper and faster, train travel offers a more eco-friendly option. For example, I traveled to Marseille and Lyon using Ouigo trains, a popular and cost-effective service in France. Booking early can secure tickets for as low as 10 euros round trip, making it a budget-friendly and environmentally conscious choice. Similarly, the Eurostar train provides a direct and efficient route from Paris to London, often more convenient and less polluting than flying.

During my time in France, I prioritized exploring the country itself rather than venturing far since for me I found there was already so much to do in Paris let alone all of France. However, I would suggest visiting nearby countries like Italy and Switzerland, which are easily accessible by train, offering both sustainability and a simple travel experience.

Public transportation in Paris is super convenient, with the metro system, the RER commuter lines, and a reliable bus network. While Uber is available and sometimes necessary, especially late at night, Uber Green offers rides in electric vehicles, providing a more sustainable alternative. Additionally, carpooling options like Uber Car Share further reduce the environmental impact by sharing rides with others heading in the same direction. Make sure to always be safe and attentive when using any type of transportation!

Walking and biking are also excellent ways to navigate Paris. The city is pedestrian-friendly, with sidewalks and bike lanes readily accessible. Services like Vélib', a bike-sharing system, offer

students affordable access to both electric and non-electric bikes, making it a convenient and sustainable mode of transportation. The current student rate for Vélib' is super low, making biking an accessible option for everyone.

For food sustainability, the Too Good To Go app is widely used in Paris. This app connects users with local businesses offering surplus food at discounted prices, significantly reducing food waste. It's an efficient way to enjoy affordable meals while contributing to environmental conservation.

In summary, my experience in Paris made sustainability in everyday life and easy to engage in. From using recyclable materials and reusable items to choosing eco-friendly transportation and minimizing food waste, Paris offers many ways to live sustainably. My advice is to pack light, embrace sustainable practices, and enjoy the rich culture and efficient public transport systems that make Paris a remarkable city for study abroad students.