

Taxis and adapted vehicles

Paris has more nearly 15,000 taxis. These are conventional cars, like those in New York, and are completely unlike the black cabs in London. In Paris, **a wheelchair user would have to transfer into a car seat while the chair is folded and put in the boot/trunk.** London's black cabs are unusual, in that most are wheelchair accessible, although they aren't the best design for everyone, particularly for some elderly people with arthritis.

Taxis can be hailed on the street, and there are a large number of cab ranks at major junctions, near tourist sites, and near many big RER and Métro stations. For two or three passengers travelling together, they can provide a not-too-expensive and efficient method of getting around, depending on the time of day. If you have come for a brief holiday or break, the time you save by using a taxi probably means that it is money well spent. As in every country, it is worth having a map in your hand, and knowing where you are going, as you are less likely to be ripped off. As in other big cities, taxis are far more difficult to find when it is raining, and during the commuter rush hours. However, the cab rank system does mean that you can join a queue of those seeking a taxi, and then you just have to be patient.

The only Taxi service we know of with adapted vehicles for chair users which is available 'on call' is:

Taxis G7 Horizon

Rue Henri Barbusse 92110 Clichy

Tel: 01 47 39 00 91 (the dedicated line for adapted taxis, staffed 24/7)

Tel: 01 47 39 47 39 (the main call centre number also staffed 24/7)

They have Tel: 01 41 27 66 99 which is a phone line where English is spoken and they should be able to get you an adapted vehicle.

website: www.taxis-g7.com *e-mail:* service.clients@taxis-g7.com

G7 operates some 4500 of the conventional Paris taxis and provides a call centre for ordering a Radio Taxi.

G7 Horizon operating in parallel to the basic services have a number of taxi drivers who are used to carrying customers with a manual wheelchair which can be folded up and put in the boot. They also have a fleet of 12 ramped taxis where a customer can get in the cab in their electric wheelchair.

The information for disabled people on their website is slightly difficult to find, but you can do this via the site map. G7 Horizon say that you can call and order a taxi with ramped access and that you should only have to wait about 15-30 minutes.

Their office is just outside the blvd Périphérique to the northwest.

Customer Services 22-28 rue Henri Barbusse, 92110 Clichy, Hauts-de-Seine

We used the G7 Horizon service, and phoned the 'English-speaking' number to make our booking. We asked them to ring back on our mobile number when they knew how long we would have to wait. The taxi that came was a people carrier which had an extending ramp and in which the seats could be folded back making space in the back. It was only possible to take a chair user and two companions, and the wheelchair space was quite cramped. There was only 100cm between the two rows of seats, and someone in a larger chair would have had to sit sideways on, possibly without restraints. The vehicle took about 45 minutes to get to the Musée d'Orsay, and arrived with €35 on the clock, so that the whole journey back to our hotel in the 20th cost €55. This compares with the fare in a conventional taxi of about €20.

In our research, we found a number of companies and organisations which can offer adapted and wheelchair accessible cars/taxis and minibuses. One can offer self-drive hire of adapted vehicles. In view of the limitations of public transport, these services may give some disabled people the chance of having easy and independent transport, to get to the places that they want to visit. Using such companies is not cheap, but choosing your accommodation to minimise the amount of travelling around you need to do and then selecting two of three 'outings' you might want to make should enable you to contain the expense. The cost for an individual journey is likely to be somewhere in the €50-100 region while to hire a vehicle for an 8-hour day is likely to cost something like €300-400.

We haven't checked out all the companies by using their services, but we got them all to quote us for a vehicle to take a chair user and two friends on three journeys:

- 1 from Charles de Gaulle airport to a central hotel;
- 2 for a whole day outing to Fontainebleau; and
- 3 for the journey from the central hotel to Orly airport.

We have also been to visit several of the companies to check the information provided.

We would have to say that our experience with trying to get quotes was quite mixed. The names we followed-up had been acquired from a number of sources, and in some cases had clearly been listed by people who had not checked what services the company could offer to a visitor.

We made our enquiries initially by e-mail, in English, and initially received only one reply! We then tried by e-mail in French, which improved the response rate a little - and we then rang up, first of all using English, and then using French. It took a lot of work to get a reasonable picture of what is on offer. One lesson from this (as we have said elsewhere) is NOT to rely on initial enquiries by e-mail, unless you get a quick response. Letters, faxes and/or a phone call are almost certainly a better way to communicate AND you may need to be persistent.

Note that some of the organisations who offer adapted transport exist primarily to provide for Parisians in terms of taking disabled children to school and elderly people to day centres etc. This means that their 'spare' capacity for dealing with the needs of visitors is limited. You may well have more luck with these groups during the school holidays when many of their regular clients are not needing transport. On the other hand, the school holidays are also when many Parisiens take their breaks - especially in August.

Most of the companies or organisations listed here offer a variety of vehicles. These are:

- adapted cars which will take one chair user in their chair and two or three friends;
- minibuses with ramped or lift access which will accommodate two or three wheelchair users, with some other passengers as well;
- larger buses with lift access for groups.

The other organisations **all request that vehicles are booked in advance**, and availability will depend on the time of year, and how much demand there is. **Bookings can generally only be made during normal office hours.**

Some will enable you to hire the vehicle for the day, with a driver/guide, and this may enable you to go to Versailles or Fontainebleau, or other places that are less easy to get to.

A few companies offer the possibility of self-drive hire of the adapted vehicles, but this will not (generally) include hand controls.

The companies from whom we had the most positive replies are:

AETAS Services

141 blvd Mac Donald, 75019

Tel: 01 30 53 69 97 *Fax:* 01 34 80 94 58

website: www.aetas.fr *e-mail:* aetas-france@wanadoo.fr

Has adapted people carriers and minibuses with 1 to 8 seats/spaces, including accommodation for up to four chair users. Taxi services and tailor-made sightseeing tours. Their quote for single journeys (for example to and from the airports) was competitive.

Aetas responded to our quotation request at the second attempt, and were very apologetic for having missed the first one. Their reply was in English. Later we booked a journey in an accessible minibus from the Gare du Nord to our hotel, using e-mail and English - and they provided an excellent service.

Les Coccinelles

8 allée du Parc de Garlande, 92220 Bagneux, Hauts-de-Seine

Tel: 01 57 63 92 60 *Fax:* 01 57 63 92 96

e-mail: christine.gestamb@wanadoo.fr

Bagneux is some 3km south of the Porte de Chatillon on the blvd Périphérique. In 2006 they did not have a website, but we were told that one is under construction. They have about 35 adapted taxis including seven that will take an electric wheelchair. They have adapted minibuses which can take between one and five passengers in wheelchairs. Prices from 42€/h TTC (all taxes included), but the overall cost depends on where and when you want to travel. In order to get a quote from this company, we needed to phone in French, and the quotation was sent in French, but we were told that queries in English would now be answered in English.

Navette Service

4 rue François Mitterrand, Bouffemont 95570

Tel: 01 39 35 09 31 *Fax:* 01 39 35 98 24

website: www.navette-service.com *e-mail:* info@navette-service.com

The office is some 20km north of Paris just off the N1 autoroute north of Sarcelles.

Has five vehicles which can take one to four wheelchairs and three other passengers. They confusingly have an old website navetteservice where the English side does not work, and a new site where it does! They provide services seven days a week.

The price from CDG Airport-Paris is about 90 €.

Ptitcar

27-29 rue Raffet, 75016

Tel: 01 42 24 70 73 *Fax:* 08 25 18 77 56

website: www.ptitcar.com *e-mail:* contact@ptitcar.com

Offers top-of-the-range adapted vehicles for a chair user and up to four other passengers. Can provide a simple taxi service, or chauffeur-driven hire for shopping or excursions.

Ptitcar were the ones who replied to our initial e-mail, with a quotation for the journeys requested. They also publish their tariff on their website, although using our browser we were unable to access to English 'button' on the home page.

Ptitcar can offer the hire of a self-drive adapted vehicle (though only for a disabled passenger, and not a vehicle with hand controls).

Taxi Ulysse

116 rue de Charenton, 75012

Tel: 01 44 67 80 69 Fax: 01 44 67 81 77

website: www.ulysse-transport.fr e-mail: paris@ulysse-transport.fr

English speaking information and drivers, and there is an English version of the website.

Has 5 taxis (Renault Kangoo) which can take one electric wheelchair and about 5 taxis for 9 passengers and up to 4 electric wheelchairs. Each uses a ramp.

Taxi Ulysse offers taxi services like this all over France although its main office is in Nice.

Operations in other areas are under separate franchises. It was founded in 1996 by Franck Vialle who had been involved in a serious accident and was left tetraplegic. Their quotation for the three specified journeys was slightly more expensive than the others.

Services which seem to be primarily for Paris residents, based around social service requirements and bussing children to and from school are listed below. They may be able to provide transport, possibly at a reasonable cost, but are not always available, and we had quite some difficulty in getting replies to our request for a quotation. Some only operate on weekdays from 09.00 to 17.00.

AIHROP

3 ave Paul Doumer, 92508 Rueil Malmaison

Tel: 01 41 29 01 29 Fax: 01 41 29 01 27

Has about 20 accessible vehicles. When we requested a quotation for the three journeys they were unable to provide it, however we know of other people who have successfully used AIHROP services.

ASAH

4 rue Charcot, 75013 Tel: 01 42 03 61 67 Fax: 01 42 02 37 91

website: www.asah75.org e-mail: asah@asah75.org

Has a number of different vehicles for 1-4 wheelchair places and 3-8 seats. Again, we were unable to get a quotation.

GIHP Ile de France (Groupement Insertion Personnes Handicapées Phisiques)

32, rue de Paradis, 75010

Tel: 01 60 77 20 20 Fax: 01 60 77 07 12

Has about 30 adapted taxis (all different kinds) including minibuses for 8 passengers or 5 wheelchairs + 3 persons. We tried to make a reservation, but we were told that they don't work on Saturdays. Their website says that they offer a service to and from the airports on a 7 day-a-week basis between 07.00 and 23.00. It also says that some services can be provided for visitors. During the week an airport shuttle costs approximately €60.

There are two organisations who are listed in various places as being able to provide adapted/accessible transport with whom we failed to make contact - in spite of sending and resending e-mails, and leaving messages on voicemail. These were:

- **Handi Transports**, 118/130 ave Jean Jaurès, 75019, Tel: 01 40 40 97 72 Fax: 01 40 40 97 72; website: www.geocities.com/handitransport
- **PMR Transport**, 20 rue Gambetta, 92500 Rueil-Malmaison, Hauts-de-Seine Tel: 01

34 46 27 47

and we think that this is primarily because their purpose, as mentioned above, is to provide services for Paris residents.

When we made contact with **Lynx Transports** who are listed in ParisInfo, they clearly didn't want to know (about our request, anyway), so we have not included their details.