Guest senior correspondent PJL, Athens GA: Sounds like a contradiction? Doing the most expensive, overpriced city in the world on a budget? Well, it can be done, and this senior couple did it.

We started our Parisian cheapness campaign several springtimes ago by not booking into one of the ritzy, grossly-overpriced name-brand hotels. We selected an inexpensive little inn adjacent to the university buildings of the Sorbonne.

The room was dinky, but comfortable, and our window was across a very narrow street where we could look into the classrooms. We got to our third floor room in a clanking tiny elevator that had space for one large or two skinny riders.

Our room cost $80 a day, and we had previously considered a cheaper hostel. But, after examining the dorm-like sleeping and down-the-hall toilets, we knew we were just too old to do the crowded GI barracks routine. Also, we opted for the university area, away from the usual tourist neighborhoods. The cafés, delis and outdoor eating and drinking places were reasonable and lively with young people and locals.

Another way of saving money was to stay away from the infamous Paris taxis. Cole Porter wrote in "The Last Time I Saw Paris", "I dodged the same old taxicabs that I had dodged for years. The chorus of their squeaky horns was music to my ears."

Those grumpy cabbies today are not only rude, but a short ride could cost $20 for a clueless American tourist. After a short trip, the taxi driver glared as I was counting out francs from my

wallet. He then suddenly let out a string of curses, grabbed a handful, jumped into his cab and raced away.

If you're physically fit, walking is a great way to see the streets, people, museums and other attractions of Paris. Also, to get to the near and distant sections of the city, there's the Metro subway system, where you can go anywhere for cheap.

While we knew high school French, the Metro at first was a puzzling maze. Fortunately, we hooked up with a French Canadian tourist couple who escorted us on our first venture, and after that, we rode the Metro everywhere.

Of course, we saw all the famed Parisian landmarks: the Arch of Triumph, the Louvre Museum, the Eiffel Tower, d'Orsay Museum, Notre Dame Cathedral, Pompidou Center, Napoleon's Tomb and many other sights. When buying visitor tickets, we made sure we got senior discounts and other savings where available.

We did try several of the upscale cafes, just to get the Paris atmosphere, but found them smoky and noisy. And too doggone expensive for the mediocre food and fussy waiters. We were just as happy to find shops that sold delicious French take-out deli fare.

We ate many of our meals while sitting on benches in the park, on steps outside museums or as we strolled along the Paris streets. We did our Paris experience for about $100 a day. It was much less the cost we'd have paid just to sleep for a couple of hours a night in one of the city's upscale hotels.