

"We want to avoid through-traffic" Paris 2024 | Laurent Nuñez, Prefect of Police of Paris, reveals in exclusivity the contours of the various restricted access zones around the Olympic venues and during the opening ceremony.

Interview by Paul Abran, Pierre Chausse, Jean-Michel Décugis, Nicolas Goinard and Jila Varoquier of the Olympic Games (July 26-August 11, 2024), the sprawling security dossier is nearing completion.

There is no shortage of sensitive issues, starting with the implementation of security perimeters around the competition zones, which will have a major impact on traffic. A real headache. The Paris police prefect has been working on this for months, almost street by street. With eight months to go, how far away from an event zone will people be able to circulate freely? How can local residents and shopkeepers obtain an exemption?

In a long interview, Laurent Nuñez agreed to reveal his plans and the outline of the famous perimeters.

Access restrictions

With eight months to go before the Games, are the security measures in place? Yes, to a large extent, as requested by the French Minister of the Interior and Overseas Territories. We have established security perimeters for all the Olympic and Paralympic competition venues, as well as for the athletes' village (in Seine-Saint-Denis), the media center, Club France and other celebration sites, the road races (cycling, marathon) and the opening ceremony.

How do I access the sites?

The basis is the same for all sites in the Paris region. There are four perimeters. The first, in the immediate vicinity of the site, is the organizer's perimeter, where only accredited people (athletes, staff, organizers, journalists, service providers, etc.) or those with tickets can enter. This is followed by the protection perimeter provided for under the Silt law (the French law on internal security and the fight against terrorism). Everyone entering this area is searched. This perimeter generally does not include local residents, except for the opening ceremony and a limited number of sites.

What are the other perimeters?

Traffic perimeters. These are not aimed at pedestrians or cyclists, who are allowed to enter. Restrictions apply to motorized two- and four-wheel vehicles. And the rules vary according to the perimeter. As close as possible to the site, the red zone: the principle is to prohibit all traffic, unless an exemption is granted, due to the large number of pedestrians and the risk of ram-raids or other disruptions. A list of categories of persons authorized to enter has been drawn up and will be the subject of consultation.

And the last one?

It's the larger blue one, which is a traffic regulation perimeter. The idea here is to avoid through traffic. We only want to let people in who live, work or want to visit a shop or restaurant. All these perimeters will be materialized by several maps that will be put online. This leaves plenty of free space for traffic.

Are these restrictions continuous?

No, they will only be activated during the competition period, two and a half hours before the start of the event and up to an hour afterwards. There will only be the special case of the Olympic Village in Saint-Denis. Restrictions around Paris Centre, for example, could be effective from 6.30 a.m. to

midnight. But once again, these areas will be freely accessible on foot or by bike. Restrictions will only apply to motorized vehicles.

And the lanes?

Reserved lanes (on the ring road and certain major boulevards), as well as relief routes used if the former are blocked, will also be activated at times to be defined. They can be used by the accredited vehicles stipulated in the decree, and by public transport.

Are cabs and VTCs excluded?

No, but VTCs are. Exemptions

Who will be affected by the red perimeter exemptions?

They concern, for example, local residents with parking lots, those visiting vulnerable people, emergency and rescue vehicles, breakdown services and so on. Cabs and VTCs should be authorized if they are dropping someone off, and only if they have proof.

How to obtain an exemption?

Taxis and VTCs will have to register in advance on a digital platform, providing a certain number of proofs of address and other documents. Retailers may need them for deliveries, for example. Access points will be defined. It's too early to make them public. For the most vulnerable people, those who don't have access to the Internet, the City of Paris, with whom we work closely, has made it possible to obtain a badge or proof of identity. Other local authorities have adopted the same idea of proximity.

When will the list of categories of people concerned be definitive?

We'll be launching a consultation until mid-January to validate our hypotheses with a public that will be received in Paris and in the prefectures of the Île-de-France departments hosting Olympic and Paralympic events. We'll then check that it corresponds to the reality of economic life. For, let me remind you, the principle is a ban on motorized traffic, and the exception, an exemption. But I don't want to forget any category of people. The President of the Republic and the Minister of the Interior and Overseas Territories have asked me to see to this personally.

What about the blue perimeter?

No pre-registration. There will still be controls, as we want to avoid transit traffic. People entering this perimeter will have to be able to justify the reason for their trip.

How long will the perimeters last?

It will be for the duration of the competition, except for the ephemeral sites, notably those in central Paris (Concorde, Invalides, Grand Palais, Champ-de-Mars, Trocadéro), for which there will be set-up and dismantling phases. In these cases, the sites will be closed to traffic shortly before the Games.

Will the perimeters be stricter for the events taking place in the city?

Yes, access conditions will be more limited, as there is a risk of cars arriving at a race. However, neutralisation time will be very short, mainly at weekends.

Will online registration suffice, or will I have to print out a document to enter the "red perimeters"?

We're going to set this up over time. The platform will be open in March at the earliest, April at the latest. You'll be given a QR code to present at the checkpoints. the opening ceremony

And on the day of the opening ceremony, what restrictions will there be?

It will be more complicated... The perimeter of the traffic ban will be wide. Above all, our idea is to activate the protection perimeter (Silt), which will encompass the neighbouring homes several days beforehand. Here, of course, vehicle access will be limited to the strict minimum. The public will be everywhere, on the upper and lower platforms. It's a strict control perimeter, and you'll have to be searched. On D-day, July 26, we'll have a very wide red perimeter. Activation will take place a few hours before the start of the ceremony, and will end when it's over. Only people who have something to do there will be allowed in: those going home or to their hotel, or those with a ticket for the ceremony.

What about bars and restaurants?

For all the red perimeters, we have 700 industrial and commercial establishments. The principle is to leave them open. But yes, you'll have to justify the fact that you're entering the perimeter to go to a restaurant, and so you'll have to register on the platform.

If people invite friends to watch the ceremony from their windows, what's the procedure?

They must be registered on the platform. This will involve a declaratory obligation on the part of the resident, who will be required to provide the identities of the guests. The same principle applies to houseboats.

Will the metros be open?

Subway stations in red and blue zones will remain open. In the Silt perimeters, this will not be the case. You can't have a metro station leaving inside a protection perimeter with people who haven't been searched (Concorde, Tuileries, Champs-Élysées- Clemenceau). There is also the problem of service capacity at certain stations close to the sites, which will close because they are too small. RATP and IDFM will provide further details shortly.

We wrote that the public capacity had been lowered to 400,000 for the opening ceremony. This has never been confirmed. Can you confirm this figure?

No, we haven't confirmed it. It will depend on the artistic program currently being drawn up. We also have to deal with the ingress and egress of booksellers... We're in discussion with them. Some of them are in strategic locations where we're worried about people crowding in. That's why we haven't yet defined the size of the audience. Everything will be finalized in the spring. the police force

How will the police and gendarmes be distributed?

For the opening ceremony, we're looking at just over 40,000 people. This will all be refined. On a day-to-day basis, we'll have an average of over 30,000 personnel divided into zones. These will include the GIGN, Raid and BRI units, as well as divers and dog teams. The various missions include protection of the sites, the last kilometer of the flame, the fight against crime, protection of the routes from the stations to the sites, security on public transport...

With all the manpower committed during the Olympic period, will there still be police officers in Paris after September 8?

Of course, we're going to keep a margin of maneuver for the police, and the well-earned leave will be staggered.

What are the results of the "zero delinquency" operations?

In the areas where we are deployed, the impact is strong. On the Champ-de-Mars, a sensitive area, since June 15 and the deployment of a reinforced plan, there has been a 50% drop in attacks on individuals and a 30% drop in attacks on property, even if some serious incidents still occur. The Prefect of Seine-Saint-Denis has also achieved exceptional results around the Olympic sites.

Minister Clément Beaune said that traffic would be "hardcore" during the Olympics.

We are working every day to ensure that impacts are kept to a minimum. We are aware of the high expectations of the economic players, and we have met with construction companies in the Paris region. And that's why we're communicating so early, so that people can anticipate and prepare.

The mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, recently expressed concerns about the organization of the Games, particularly with regard to transportation. Do you share these concerns?

I'm very calm about the public transport, safety and traffic aspects.