



How to do Paris on the chic

By Christian Lacroix

The fashion designer tailor-makes your stylish city stay



Think small. Paris isn't about the big, obvious stuff; instead, go for unknown little museums like the Musée Bourdelle (16-18 Rue Antoine Bourdelle; 00 33 1 4954 7373; free), home to the 19th-century studio and garden of brilliant sculptor Antoine Bourdelle – it's much more civilised than cramming in with the crowds at the Louvre. The petite Musée de la Vie Romantique (16 Rue Chaptal; 00 33 1 5531 9567; free) and the arty Musée Delacroix (6 Rue de Furstenberg; 00 33 1 4441 8650, www.musee-delacroix.fr; €4) also hide tranquil gardens in the centre of the city.

Forget the food – it's the setting that counts.

For lunch, I like to sit among the columns and mirrored walls at Le Dali in Le Meurice hotel (228 Rue de Rivoli; 00 33 1 4458 1044, www.lemeurice.com). Or Café de Flore (172 Blvd Saint-Germain; 00 33 1 4548 5526, www.cafe-deflore.fr), where Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir used to write and debate, is a stylish spot near the galleries of Saint Germain. Le Terrass Hôtel in Montmartre has an incredible view from the rooftop restaurant (12-14 Rue Joseph-de-Maistre; 00 33 1 4492 3400, www.terrass-hotel.com; terrace open Apr-Sept).

The Marais is the only place to

shop. Its northern areas are still untouristy corners of discovery, with charming boutiques, cafes and galleries around Rue de Bretagne, Charlot and Vieille du Temple – I used to live on Rue de Bearn, near Place des Vosges. The ninth arrondissement near Galeries Lafayette is



newly fashionable, too – you can easily lose a few hours (and euros) in the streets here.

The chicest sleep in the city is Hôtel Le Notre

Dame (1 Quai Saint-Michel; 00 33 1 4354 2043, www.hotelnotredameparis.com; doubles from €201, room only), but I *would* say that because I designed it! You can see the Seine and the cathedral through the bedroom windows – it's like a canvas by French painter Albert Marquet, who had a studio a couple of doors further down. It's right in the



Ab Fab: above, amazing views from the rooftop restaurant at Le Terrass Hôtel, Montmartre; far left, pick up stylish shoes in the Marais. Left, Hôtel Le Notre Dame was designed by Lacroix

historic heart of Paris, so the inspiration came from old Technicolor movies starring Gina Lollobrigida, including *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. It's pretty flamboyant!

Suburbs are so 'now'. There are plenty of easy day trips from Paris, but the best ones are inspired by French artists. I love heading southeast to Barbizon near Fontainebleau (40 minutes by train), where many 19th-century painters used to live – Jean Cocteau owned a house nearby, too. Alternatively, the beaches to the north are surprisingly exotic – the light and landscape of Le Crotoy (less than two hours by train) appears in Flemish paintings, featuring cows by the lakes and seagulls soaring among sunny skies. And I adore Montfort-l'Amaury, near Rambouillet Forest, just west of Paris (an hour on the train), which was *très chic* in the '50s and '60s. ■

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