

lonely planet
MAGAZINE

December 2008

FIRST
ISSUE



Rediscover Paris

The **new neighbourhoods**
you'll love, whatever your budget

KENYA

Why now is the time to return

BRITAIN

30 reasons why it's best
in winter (really!), with

Dan Cruickshank

Kelly Holmes

Raymond Blanc

STEPHEN FRY
Wild We
road tr



6 FREE Mini Guides to pull out and keep
EDINBURGH ● NEW YORK ● ITALY ● NORTHUMBERLAND ● RIGA ● SINGAPORE

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The Canal Saint-Martin, at the heart of the hidden districts of Paris that we explore this issue

It's a small world

Welcome to Lonely Planet Magazine – home to an original take on places to go. Our focus is on the incredible experiences travel can unlock for you: meeting new people, having your mind blown by the landscapes you cross, trying different cuisines and learning of the history and cultures that have shaped the locations you find yourself in.

In this first issue, BBC Two presenter and art historian Sandrine Voillet offers many reasons, from a local's perspective, to **see Paris through fresh eyes** (p40); author Giles Foden encounters big cats and a Maasai wedding, finding inspiration to **fall in love with Kenya again** (p54); and, tongue only briefly heading in the direction of cheek, Dan Cruickshank, Jimmy Doherty, Kelly Holmes, Jonathan Dimbleby, Raymond Blanc and others suggest why **Britain is best in winter** (p72).

In every issue, **10 Easy Trips** (p23) will aim to inspire you to travel right now, whatever your budget – plus the six **free Mini Guides** at the back of the magazine (p131) can be pulled out and stored away as the foundation for future trips. Our pages will reflect the best of BBC travel content (BBC Worldwide and Lonely Planet joined forces late last year) and the sharply researched, tell-it-as-it-is knowledge that Lonely Planet's reputation has been built on.

The **Postcards** section (p10) is our starting point and lies at the very heart of what we will offer; a chance for you to share your travel stories and beautiful photographs and to prove that, through travelling or simply by reading *Lonely Planet Magazine* each month, nowhere feels out of reach any more.

Lonely Planet? Small world, more like.



Peter Grunert
Editor

CONTRIBUTORS THIS MONTH



STEPHEN FRY

Fresh from his epic road trip for the BBC One series *In America*, Stephen Fry recalls his time in Utah and Arizona, starting with 'one of nature's greatest and most insane achievements', p90.



SANDRINE VOILLET

That's Sandrine you see on the cover of our first issue, strolling towards the Ecole du Louvre, where she studied Far Eastern art. She asks us to rediscover Paris, her home, on p40.



DAN CRUICKSHANK

In the first of his monthly columns for *Lonely Planet Magazine*, the presenter of BBC Two's *Adventures in Architecture* explores the fragile, wondrous ruins of Babylon, p35.





Traditional Paris – Chez Julien brasserie (above) – meets the up-and-coming, along the Canal Saint-Martin (left)

REDISCOVER
PARIS

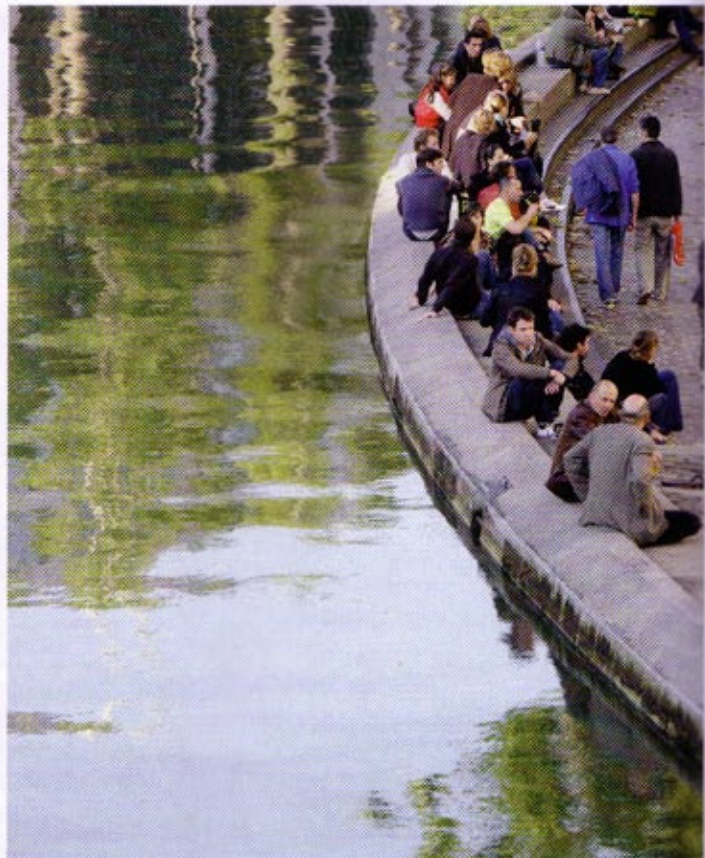
Paris can feel familiar but, as local art historian Sandrine Voillet, of BBC Two's *Sandrine's Paris*, explains, to appreciate the real Paris you need to explore the city's hidden areas, starting at the 10th arrondissement

WORDS SANDRINE VOILLET | PHOTOGRAPHS PHILIP LEE HARVEY

December 2008



41



'PARIS IS FULL OF ACCIDENTAL DISCOVERIES, MOMENTS OF SUDDEN ILLUMINATION'

Above right: East side Canal Saint-Martin. Opposite: café culture is a big part of Parisian life; around 1900, there were some 27,000 cafés, making Paris the drinking capital of the world

THE Ménilmontant district is in the east of Paris, north of the famous Bastille prison. On one occasion when I was there, I realised I was late for a meeting in Belleville Park, not far away. I decided to attempt a shortcut I hadn't tried before and quickly found myself in a picturesque network of hidden alleyways and narrow streets lined with charming painted houses and tiny, well-tended gardens. As dusk began to fall – the old, ornate lampposts lining the streets lighting up – I arrived at a place we call *la Campagne à Paris*, literally 'the country in Paris'.

Many Parisians wouldn't know of these streets, but then this is one of the things I love about living in Paris, the accidental discoveries, moments of sudden illumination in the City of Lights. Such unexpected adventures are part of life for a Parisian, and also what makes Parisians different. The city represents

France's cultural heart or, perhaps, as daily newspaper *Libération* has put it, 'its belly button' – all roads and railways are magnetically drawn to it, converging in a star-shaped network with the very centre, Point O, situated right in front of Notre Dame cathedral.

Nowadays, of course, one of those rail lines comes from London, making travel between these two great cities little more than a commute. In fact, a French decorator based in London once suggested to me that Paris has become a suburb of London and vice versa.

When people arrive on the Eurostar at the Gare du Nord, not too far from Ménilmontant and Belleville, they tend to have a quick glance around, frown at the lack of typical Parisian glamour and join the long taxi queue, destined for the well-trodden paths along the Seine. But there are compelling reasons to stay here in the 10th arrondissement and discover what this area has to offer. Living in a nearby district, I spend much of my time here, and there's a surprising wealth of history, shops, cafés and many other points of interest to explore.

The Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis runs between the Gare du Nord and the Gare de l'Est. It's a street that has always carried a reputation for indulging the racier, edgier side of life. This is still the working place for many ladies of the night and it's where various ethnic communities, particularly the north Africans (or French nationals who once lived in north Africa, known as *Pieds Noirs*), Turks, Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Caribbeans make their homes, bringing their own influences to bear on the city.

Here, hard-working shopkeepers mix with the aesthetes and hedonists sipping their espressos in artfully rundown bistros like *Chez Jeannette*, 47 Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis. With its old 19th-century décor enhanced by 1950s néons and chandeliers, the place has hardly changed for decades. I chat to *Louissette*, a diminutive figure with cropped grey hair who has spent 45 years of her life here. 'Back then, we served rabbit stews not *les petits plats distingués* [small, stylised dishes],' she says, looking at the blackboard. I think she wonders where all the time went, eyeing up the young crowd dining here with







'HERE ARE THE SILENT WITNESSES OF PARISIAN LIFE... URGING US TO DREAM'

Opposite: le Père Lachaise, where local Edith Piaf is buried. Above left: the Edith Piaf Museum in Ménilmontant. Above right: immigrant communities rub up against Paris's bohoh

suspicion, these uninvited guests in the landscape of her own memories. 'All these new shops!' she says. Her accent reminds me of the popular songs from the 1950s when people sung with the Parisian *gouaille*, a slang, but also an attitude, something akin to Cockney in London.

The new shops are part of a process of gentrification that's happening in these *quartiers populaires* (working class districts). People known as *Bobos* – bourgeois bohemians – are converting disused workshops into lofts, much like their counterparts have done with Hoxton and Shoreditch in London.

Right across from Chez Jeannette is an arched entrance that leads to the Brady passage, linking the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis to the Boulevard du Strasbourg. Many picturesque glass-roofed passages like this one were built in the 19th century, conceived by urban planners and designed to protect pedestrians from mud and horse-drawn vehicles. It was a period

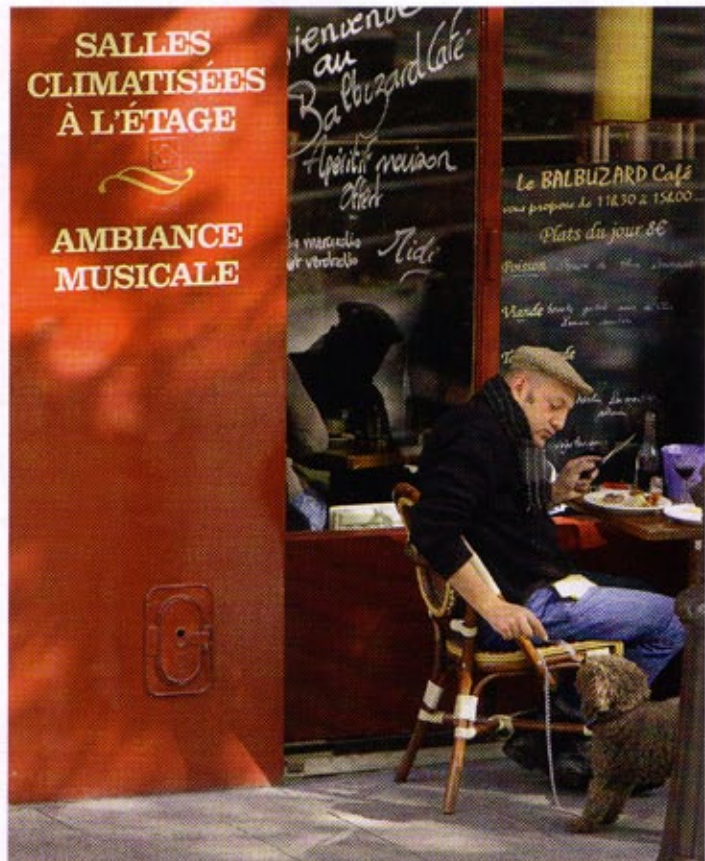
of immense change in the city that saw the rise of the *flâneur* – 'strollers' who walked the metropolis. Their champion and greatest practitioner was the poet Charles Baudelaire.

Not far from Chez Jeannette is the brasserie Chez Julien. It's a completely different scene here, more traditional, more austere but no less arresting. I sit contemplating the tiled walls depicting the four seasons, represented by flowery ladies, the style reminiscent of the Czech Art Nouveau painter, Alphonse Mucha. The décor is so mesmerising, you could almost forget to eat your oysters. It's no surprise the restaurant is listed – even the brass coat hangers have been preserved.

Paris is, of course, famous for its café culture, but it was during the Belle Époque (Beautiful Era), beginning in the late 19th century and running until World War One, that the transformation really took place, the burgeoning wealth of the city during the Second Empire leading to a boom in cafés and restaurants. Around 1900, the city boasted some 27,000 cafés, plus many wine bars and cabarets, making Paris the world capital of drinking venues. And it

was where an excessive consumption of 'the Green Fairy', absinthe, eventually led to the potent spirit being banned.

MANY of the cafés of the Belle Époque have disappeared, but gems can still be found in and around the 10th arrondissement, saved by the restaurant giant, Groupe Flo, which bought many of these historical brasseries (such as Brasserie Bofinger, Brasserie Flo and Terminus Nord). Paris's waiters have something of a reputation, but waitering used to be a job undertaken with the utmost seriousness and a *garçon* (an archaic term for waiter) would perform his duties with one eye on promotion to management. The Golden Age might be over, but it's reassuring to still see the men dressed in black and white slaloming with style around the tables. You might find a rare English-speaking tourist at a table here, far from the beaux quartiers. They've heard about Chez Julien through word of mouth – *le bouche à oreille* – or thanks to good advice from hotel staff. They're joined by ▶



'MANY CAFÉS OF THE BELLE EPOQUE HAVE DISAPPEARED, BUT GEMS CAN STILL BE FOUND'

Above right and opposite: the 10th arrondissement is home to characterful cafés, like Le Balbuzard Cafe, Rue René Boulanger, and bars such as Le Petit Chateau D'Eau

Parisians who come here after a performance in one of the numerous surrounding theatres dating from the times of 'the most famous actress in the history of the world', as Sarah Bernhardt was trumpeted – by herself as well as others.

There is an interesting contrast between the busy and colourful streets around here and the grandness of Porte Saint-Martin. This Arc de Triomphe built in 1674 celebrates King Louis XIV's military victories. We can see Louis XIV as Hercules, naked with an enormous wig (yes, wig...), on one of four bas reliefs.

The houses closer to the Porte Saint-Denis, at the beginning of Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis, are typical of 16th-century Parisian architecture, but a counter-point to this is the amount of graffiti around here too. Many don't approve, but I think it adds a colour and poetry to the grey city during winter. Here are the silent witnesses of Parisian life telling passers-by to revolt, indulging in irony, urging us to

dream – all the things that Parisians have always done. My present favourite is one by Miss Caustique, aka Miss Tic, featuring stylish girls dressed in black adorned with poems, one of which reads, 'Devenir simple, c'est compliqué' – becoming simple is complicated.

ONE road of some personal significance to the west of the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis is Rue Martel. Two doors along from a couscous restaurant on this street, a large wooden door opens on a courtyard leading to a stone staircase. On the top floor is the workshop of Georgian tailor, Mr Dindar. To me it's a shrine – it's where my wedding dress was made. My English friend Alison, a stylist, and Mr Dindar cut their way through five meters of satin under the benevolent look of Atatürk, Turkish songs on the radio competing with the metallic chatter of a sewing machine.

Mr Dindar's history is typical of this immigrant area of Paris – a Georgian descendant and raised in Turkey, he came to Paris as a skilled tailor looking for work.

He found it, and in a city dedicated to exquisite fashion design, his reputation spread. He now creates dresses for famous French labels and, with the financial rewards of creating *The Lion King* costumes, is thinking of opening a café.

If he does, he'll have to offer a nod to Napoleon Bonaparte. Water supply has always been an issue in Paris – during the Revolution, Parisians were allowed only one litre per person per day, and there was no water available to clean the streets and the sewers. Young Bonaparte asked a politician, Jean-Antoine Chaptal what he could do to please Parisians, and Chaptal answered, 'Give them water.' Once in power, Napoleon had the Canal de L'Ourcq built leading to Canal Saint-Martin, which means that there's a steady supply of water for all the coffee now drunk in those cafés.

One irony is that nowadays you'll pay around five euros for a litre of Vittel at fashionable restaurants like Chez Prune and cafés Le Sporting or Canal 96, situated right on the canal. You won't find French gastronomy served in the cafés – expect instead cold plates of smoked charcuterie and fragrant cheeses with wine. For the





'FROM BELLEVILLE HILL, THE VIEW CAN COMPETE WITH MONTMARTRE'

Above and opposite: make like a local and explore Paris – from Parc de Belleville, looking west, you'll be rewarded with an awe-inspiring view of this beautiful city

customers, food is less important than experiencing the place: beautiful scenery made unique by the iron and wooden bridges linking the two sides of the canal.

You can still sit in a café's terrace in December in Paris, despite the cold, thanks to the smoking ban. It's prompted some café owners to purchase ornate gas heaters so Parisians can still enjoy observing the activities of the street through the grey sheen of a *Gitane*, which seems more appropriate in this city than any other.

And such restrictions don't stop the fashionistas from staying until late at the legendary *Hôtel du Nord* either, right on the canal. Originally the set for a film with the same name, it has now been converted into a restaurant where people come to wait for the arrival of Johnny Depp and his spouse Vanessa Paradis.

Many people might remember Vanessa Paradis' first song *Joe Le Taxi*, which she sang as a mere 14 year old, but where the female voice is concerned, there is really

only one that matters, emblematic not only of Paris but France itself. It is, of course, Edith Piaf's, who was about the same age as Vanessa Paradis when she started singing. Except in Piaf's case, she sang purely to survive.

EDITH Giovanna Gassion grew up on the streets of Belleville. She was nicknamed 'Piaf' – sparrow – because of her size, but also because of her plucky and tenacious nature. I decided to pay a visit to the Edith Piaf Museum, a 15-minute walk to the west of the *Hôtel du Nord*. When I arrived, Mr Bernard Marchois opened the door of an anonymous flat, recognisable only for the sign 'Musée Edith Piaf'.

'Edith lived here in the '30s,' he started. In the background her voice could be heard, the strains of *La Vie en Rose*. Marchois told me how in 1958, when he was 16, he met Edith. He talked of her as if it were yesterday. Seeing that I was rather puzzled at how a 16-year-old boy could approach such a legend, he explained, 'She saw me waiting for hours at her door

on Boulevard Lannes [in the 16th arrondissement] and invited me to go to see her singing at l'Olympia concert hall.'

Edith Piaf is buried in le Père Lachaise cemetery not far away. Morbid though it might seem to some, I enjoy strolling in le Père Lachaise. It's one of the most beautiful green spaces of the capital, with numerous maple trees and ash trees growing amidst the final resting home for some of Paris's greatest artists. Here we can find the tombs of painter Eugène Delacroix, writers Marcel Proust and Oscar Wilde and musicians as different as Chopin and Jim Morrison. It's like strolling through a *Who's Who* directory of the dead.

Not far north of the cemetery is the lovely Parc de Belleville, green lung of the 20th arrondissement – this whole area, along with Ménilmontant, was once given over to vineyards, and famous for its numerous *ginguettes* (inns where you could drink wine and dance). The landscape is still green but it faces a constant battle against city planners.

I hope it stays as I am seeing it now. Sitting on the top of Belleville hill, from the entrance of Piat Street, the panoramic view of Paris can compete with the one you have from Montmartre, without the need to jostle with others for a look. I remember taking shots from this very spot before meeting the photographer Willy Ronis, while making the BBC series *Paris*. Belleville is the spiritual home of Ronis, who has taken pictures of everyday Parisian life for more than 60 years – have a look at his photographic homage, *Mon Paris*, for a stunning representation of the city. He captures what I like to call a mosaic of atmospheres, vignettes of incredibly diverse lives, each of them individually Parisian but also part of a whole, part of the mosaic that makes up Paris.

The old quartiers populaires are so rewarding to spend time in. Enjoying them is simply about walking or cycling around, making discoveries, just as Baudelaire and his coterie did all those years ago. As the great poet wrote in his book, *The Painter of Modern Life*, 'It is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow. To be away from home, yet to feel oneself everywhere at home, to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, yet to remain hidden from the world – such are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define.' 📖

NEXT MONTH
REDISCOVER BERLIN



MAKE IT HAPPEN

REDISCOVER PARIS



Rediscover PARIS
Paris is not just a city, it's a way of life. Discover the hidden gems of Paris, from the hidden gems of the city's hidden gems, starting at the Gare du Nord.

So you've just arrived at the Gare du Nord on the Eurostar. Ignore that queue snaking towards the taxi rank. Instead, walk south in the direction of the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis. You're about to discover a side to Paris you never knew existed...



Johnny Depp is a fan of Hotel du Nord

ESSENTIALS

Getting there

It now takes only two hours 15 minutes on the Eurostar from London St Pancras International to Paris Gare du Nord (eurostar.com; from £59 return). P&O Ferries sail from London to Calais (poferies.com; £27 each way).

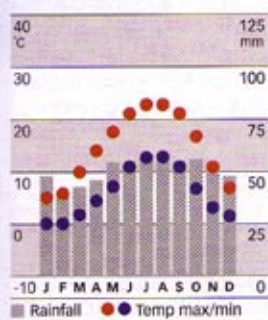
Getting around

The métro in Paris is a work of art in itself. Tickets include daily passes, weekly passes, and the Paris Visite Pass, which allows entry into some of the city's museums and attractions. See parismetro.com for details.

Further reading

Lonely Planet's *Paris* guide (£12.99) provides detailed info on the city. Also read *Sandrine's Paris* by Sandrine Voillet, a cultural history of the city (£20, BBC Books).

Climate



THE FINAL WORD

'To err is human. To loaf is Parisian.' **Victor Hugo**



SANDRINE'S NOTEBOOK

The shabby chic bistro **CHEZ JEANNETTE** 1 is the perfect stop for a coffee or apéritif. (47 Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis; 00 33 1 47 70 30 89).

You'll find some of the best-value restaurants in Paris – the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi cafés of **PASSAGE BRADY** 2. Check out Roi du Kashmir (76 Passage Brady; 00 33 1 48 00 08 85); Passage de Pondicherry (84 Passage Brady; 00 33 1 53 32 63 10); or Pooja (91 Passage Brady; 00 33 1 48 24 00 83).

A decorative Art Nouveau brasserie, **CHEZ JULIEN** 3 serves great French cuisine, including wonderful oysters (16 Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis; 00 33 1 47 70 12 06).

Expect classical architecture and modern graffiti at **PORTE SAINT-MARTIN** 4, a triumphal arch commissioned by Louis XIV.

There are plenty of cafés around the **CANAL SAINT-MARTIN** 5, including Chez Prune (36 Rue Beaupaire; 00 33 1 42 41 30 47); Le Sporting (3, Rue des Récollets; 00 33 1 46 07 02 00); and Canal 96 (96 quai de Jemappes; 00 33 1 42 02 87 95).

Also on the canal is the **HOTEL DU NORD** 6. This started out as a set for the film of the same name and has since become an actual venue frequented by Paris's glitterati (102, Quai de Jemmapes; 00 33 1 40 40 78 78; hoteldunord.org).

The **EDITH PIAF MUSEUM** 7 was created by the legendary singer's biographer Bernard Marchois. Occupying rooms in a private apartment, the collection includes music, posters and memorabilia. Open by appointment only so call in advance (5 rue Crespin du Gast; 00 33 1 43 55 52 72; admission free).

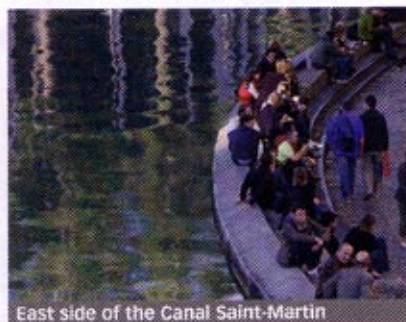
LE PÈRE LACHAISE 8 is a huge, sprawling cemetery reputed to be the world's most visited so you might not be the only living soul here. Look out for the lipstick kisses on Oscar Wilde's tomb. And don't be surprised if you see a security guard by Jim Morrison's grave – fans have been known to do the whole sex and drugs thing there in honour of the rockstar.

Take in the view from the hill at the **PARC DE BELLEVILLE** 9, it rivals anything you might see from Montmartre.

Turn the page for more ways to see Paris

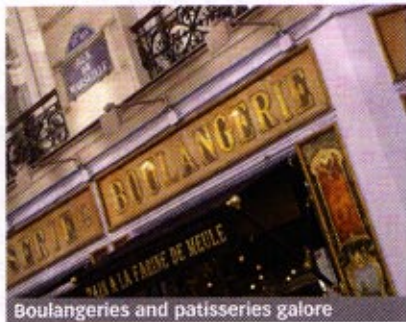
MAKE IT HAPPEN

3 WAYS TO SEE MORE OF PARIS...



East side of the Canal Saint-Martin

Budget



Boulangeries and patisseries galore

Mid-range



Splash out in style at the Hotel de Crillon

Luxury

SLEEP

Just around the corner from Place de la République and within easy walking distance of the nightlife in Ménilmontant, the **HÔTEL DE NEVERS** has 32 basic but clean and decent rooms and is great value for money. (£28; 53 Rue Malte; 00 33 1 46 33 33 02; see lonelyplanet.com for a full review).

BARGAIN!

Check out the **HOTEL LIBTEL CROIX DE MALTE** where a tropical theme dominates the décor, with its glassed-in courtyard featuring a giant jungle mural and ultra-bright Walasse Ting prints on the wall. (£65; 5 rue de Malte; 00 33 1 48 05 09 36; hotelcroixdemalte-paris.com).

BARGAIN!

With a facade that makes Buckingham Palace look like a Travelodge and enough marble to rival Rome, **HOTEL DE CRILLON** is unashamedly opulent. The rooms are stunning and there is an exceptionally fine fine-dining restaurant where, along with the haute cuisine, you can peruse a wine list as long as the Bible (£600; 00 33 1 44 71 15 00; 10 Place de la Concorde; crillon.com).

EAT

BARGAIN! Although there are mid-priced dishes on the menu at **CHEZ PAPA**, including southwestern specialties such as cassoulet, most people come for the Salade Boyard, a huge bowl of lettuce, tomato, sautéed potatoes, ham and two types of cheese, all for £6. There are 10 branches across Paris (206 Rue Lafayette; 00 33 1 42 09 53 87).



Let them eat cake. OK, so Marie Antoinette may not have actually said it, but in Paris it's really worth allowing yourself to eat cake. Or tarts, or macaroons or anything else from one of Paris's many great patisseries. Try **STOHRER**. It does a 'King's Cake', appropriately enough, and a fine line in candied chestnuts (51 Rue Montorgueil; 00 33 1 42 33 38 20; stohrer.fr).

Two-Michelin-starred **LE GRAND VÉFOUR** has been a favourite since pre-Revolution days and Napoleon, Victor Hugo and Jean Paul Satre have all eaten here. On the northern edge of the Jardin du Palais Royal, it's an incredibly beautiful restaurant. Signature dishes include foie gras ravioli with truffle cream. The fixed lunch costs £70 (17 rue de Beaujolais; 00 33 1 42 86 87 88; grand-vefour.com).

DRINK

Tucked away between République and Oberkampf, **LA CARAVANE** is something of a gem, with amiable and relaxed bar staff and locals, and prices that won't bring you out in a cold sweat. Best on weeknights when there's a naturally chilled-out vibe (35 Rue de la Fontaine au Roi; 00 33 1 49 23 01 86).

You're in Paris and you want wine. It's only natural. We suggest you get yourself to 'the Stolen Glass'. At least, that's the English translation of **LE VERRE VOLÉ**, a tiny wine shop and bar that specialises in excellent wines from southeastern France (between £15-£45 a bottle). There's expert advice on offer too (67 rue de Lancry; 00 33 1 48 03 17 34).

KONG brings Asia to Paris, with Phillipe Starck providing the brash, kitschy styling cues (below). Check out the view of the Seine while sipping on a Champagne cocktail or try the Kong martini – vodka, creme de cassis, pineapple juice and sake – both £12 (1, rue du Pont Neuf; kong.fr).



SHOP

If you're something of an antique hunter, avoid the overpopulated Marche aux Puces flea market and head to **MARCHÉ SERPETTE** (rue des Rosiers; Saint Paul on the Metro is the nearest stop). In the current economic climate, expect plenty of good deals on all kinds of things at one of Paris's most famous department stores, **LE BON MARCHÉ**.

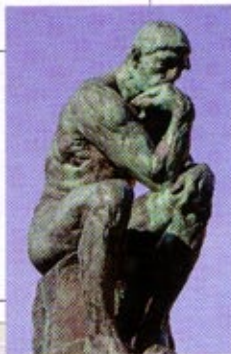
BARGAIN!

When much of Paris closes the shutters on Sunday, the district of **LE MARAIS** comes into its own, with small, artfully conceived shops doing a brisk trade in clothes, furnishings, antiques and art. Some of Paris's upcoming designers have set up here so you're sure to find something unique and memorable.

Totter in and out of the designer shops along **RUE DU FAUBOURG SAINT-HONORE** and **AVENUE MONTAIGNE** and attempt even greater levels of surliness than the staff working there. For truly royal treatment, make an appointment at one of the private rooms of Coco Chanel (chanel.com) or Christian Dior (diior.com).

SEE

In 1785 the cemeteries of Paris were overflowing so many bodies were exhumed and moved underground – see the bones of six million Parisians at **CATACOMBS MUSEUM** (£5.60; 1 place Denfert Rochereau; catacombes-de-paris.fr/english.htm).



One of the finest sculptors of any era and any nation, Auguste Rodin gets his own museum on the south bank of the city. At the **MUSÉE RODIN** you'll find such famous sculptures as 'The Thinker' (left) and 'The Kiss' (£8 for entrance to the museum, exhibitions and gardens; 79 Rue de Varenne; musee-rodin.fr).

BARGAIN! Founded in 1876, the **THEATER DES BOUFFES DU NORD**, behind the Gare du Nord, is a hugely atmospheric theatre with its bare walls and original wooden seats in the balcony. Director Peter Brook, 83, has been there for 30 years and presents an innovative mix of music and theatre, with some performances in English (tickets £10-20; 7 bis, boulevard de la Chapelle; bouffesdunord.com).