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**December 24, 2006**

## 36 Hours in Paris

**By SETH SHERWOOD**

Correction Appended

"THE chief danger about [Paris](#)," T. S. Eliot wrote to a friend, "is that it is such a strong stimulant." That wasn't merely the overcaffeinated ramblings of a Left Bank cafe habitué. Few cities thrill visitors with such a beguiling multiplicity of personalities. There is the devout Paris of Notre Dame's Gothic solemnity, and the naughty Paris of Pigalle's red-light bars. Sophisticated Paris radiates from the vaulted galleries of the [Louvre](#) and the gilded Opéra Garnier, while bohemian Paris emerges in the art galleries of the Marais and gritty rock 'n' roll nightclubs. For every Gallic gastronomic temple, there's an Asian, African or Middle Eastern restaurant brimming with exotic flavors. And for every Jean Paul Gaultier, there's a fledgling fashion student opening his first boutique. In the words of Henry Miller, another American drawn to Paris's manifold pleasures, lofty and low: "To know Paris is to know a great deal."

Friday

4 p.m.

1) GO IN SEINE

It may sound cheesy, but for postcard views of Paris's icons — and a crash course in the city's geography — float down the lazy Seine on a sightseeing cruise from [Bateaux Parisiens](#) (Port de la Bourdonnais; 33-825-01-01-01; [www.bateauxparisiens.com](http://www.bateauxparisiens.com); 10 euros, or \$13.50 at \$1.35 to the euro). Time compresses like an accordion as you pass the gargoyles of Notre Dame Cathedral, the latticework of the Eiffel Tower and the Luxor obelisk at the Place de la Concorde, where Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette met their grisly end at the guillotine.

6 p.m.

2) STOP IN THE NAME OF LOUVRE

With some 10 miles of galleries housing a collection that spans every corner of the globe and every era of human history, the [Louvre](#) (Rue de Rivoli; 33-1-40-20-53-17; [www.louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr)) calls for wise planning. (On Fridays, the museum stays open until 10 p.m. and admission drops to 6 euros from 8.50 after 6 p.m.) Start on Level 1 at the Denon Wing. After a splendid welcome by the Winged Victory of Samothrace, you'll encounter Italian Renaissance masterpieces by Titian, Botticelli, Raphael and Da Vinci, culminating in the Mona Lisa. Next hit the Apollo Gallery, a [Versailles](#)-like

chamber that houses the 140-carat Regent Diamond and the 2,490-diamond-studded crown of Empress Eugénie. Wrap up at Richelieu Level 2, with Bosch's "Ship of Fools," [Vermeer's "Astronomer"](#) and the Rubens-filled Medici Gallery.

10 p.m.

### 3) FINISH THE EVE WITH YVES

Bourgeois Left Bankers are packed elbow-to-tweed-elbow at the [Comptoir du Relais](#) (9, carrefour de l'Odéon; 33-1-44-27-07-97) for good reason. Opened by Yves Camdeborde in 2005, the très petit bistro serves simple, delicious and surprisingly affordable classics like creamy slices of foie gras with chunky prune sauce, a juicy chop of suckling pig and a debilitatingly rich pot de crème made with Valrhona chocolate. The ever-changing six-course tasting menu — for a mere 42 euros — may include creations like veal sweetbreads in yellow wine and poached pear with saffron. Otherwise, a three-course meal for two, without wine, runs about 70 euros. Book well in advance.



Saturday

10 a.m.

### 4) SWEET TEMPTATIONS

Not all baguettes are created equal. At the bakery of [Gérard Mulot](#) (76, rue de Seine; 33-1-43-26-85-77), the bread and croissants (1 euro) are sublime, and the jewel-like pastries — like the ruby red raspberry tarts and jade green pistachio macarons — are as finely wrought as Fabergé eggs. Eat them as you stroll to the belle époque [Café de Flore](#) nearby (172, boulevard St.-Germain; 33-1-45-48-55-26), the former hangout of André Breton and the Surrealists, Jean-Paul Sartre and the Existentialists, and a who's

who of screen stars like Brigitte Bardot. Trotsky and Hemingway may be gone, but the French intelligentsia still stops in to slurp café crème and exceptional hot chocolate (5.50 to 7 euros).

Noon

### 5) GRAVE MATTERS

"I wish to dig my own grave, wide and deep," Charles Baudelaire wrote in "The Joyful Corpse." Roughly a century and a half later, the final resting place of [France's](#) greatest poet can be seen at [Cimetière du Montparnasse](#) (3, boulevard Edgar-Quinet; 33-1-44-10-86-50). This ocean of gray stone is Paris's most literary cemetery, holding the graves of Maupassant, Beckett, Duras and Man Ray, as well as arrivistes like Susan Sontag and Serge Gainsbourg.

3 p.m.

## 6) FRANCE IN YOUR PANTS

Rather than go bankrupt buying Dior and Chanel on Avenue Montaigne, spend an afternoon discovering upstart talents in the Haut-Marais, a newer, edgier fashion and design center. The fast-rising designer Gaspard Yurkievich makes flashy creations like silvery rock 'n' roll boots (349 euros) and purple knee socks with gilded snowflake patterns (30 euros) (43, rue Charlot; 33-1-42-77-42-88; [www.gaspardyurkievich.com](http://www.gaspardyurkievich.com)). If Willy Wonka wanted a shoulder bag, he'd dig the psychedelically swirled ones (55 euros) from Pauline Pin (51, rue Charlot; 33-1-42-78-06-67; [www.paulinepin.com](http://www.paulinepin.com)). And Barbarella could accessorize with a white fur handbag (300 euros) from Vanessa Bruno, known for minimalist garments in white, gray and black (100, rue Vieille du Temple; 33-1-42-77-19-41, [www.vanessabruno.com](http://www.vanessabruno.com)).

8 p.m.

## 7) TASTES OF NORTH AFRICA

When the conical clay lid is pulled off a Moroccan tagine — name of both the cooking vessel and the stew — it's like a genie being released from the bottle: a thick steam from slow-cooked meats, fruits, nuts and spices enchants the senses. Some of Paris's most bewitching tajines are served at [Le Souk](#), a Bastille-district spot brimming with old-school Moorish décor and North African pop music (1, rue Keller; 33-1-49-29-05-08). Order the ouarazate, a savory-sweet casserole of lamb, caramelized pears, almonds and raisins. Or the sahraoui, which combines lamb, chicken, prunes, apricots, figs and almonds. A three-course meal for two, without wine, is around 75 euros.

10 p.m.

## 8) ART AFTER DARK

Need a digestif? The flamboyant installations of contemporary art at the four-year-old [Palais de Tokyo](#) — the only Paris art museum open until midnight — make a thought-provoking after-dinner treat (13, avenue du Président-Wilson; 33-1-47-23-54-01; [www.palaisdetokyo.com](http://www.palaisdetokyo.com); 6 euros). The avant-garde space houses large-scale rotating exhibits of experimental painting, photography, video and multimedia works that push envelopes and boundaries. The kitschy gift shop, BlackBlock ([www.blackblock.org](http://www.blackblock.org)), does likewise with products like gelatinous sex toys and action figures of Jean-Michel Basquiat and [Oscar Wilde](#). So does the ground-floor restaurant, Tokyo Eat, which serves arty fare like coconut and pineapple ravioli with vanilla syrup (9 euros).

After Midnight

## 9) PARIS IS PARTYING

Small is the new big in Paris night life, thanks to a slew of petit places — hidden miniclubs, intimate apartmentlike lounges — popping up under the mansard roofs and wrought-iron balconies. Opened this summer, the cozy bar [Wini June](#) (16, rue du Petit-Thouars; 33-1-44-61-76-41) has charmed the fashion and design set with its living-room-chic combination of Empire-style furnishings, Baccarat

glassware and rock music. If dancing on banquettes is more your speed, head to the Champs-Élysées and duck into [Le Madam](#) (128 rue la Boétie; [www.madam.fr](http://www.madam.fr)), a basement hideaway with neo-Baroque electric chandeliers and D.J.-spun electro-house music.

## Sunday

10 a.m.

### 10) BRIC, BRAC AND BEYOND

Admit it: You have long fantasized about dressing like a dandified 19th-century French colonial military officer. Sate your fetish at the enormous [Marché aux Puces](#) flea market ([www.parispuces.com](http://www.parispuces.com)) in St.-Ouen, on the northern tip of Paris. The best finds are in the section called Vernaison, where 200-plus vendors sell Provençal cookware, Empire-era clocks, Oriental rugs, Baroque mirrors, sepia Riviera postcards, creepy 19th-century dolls, old Chanel perfume decanters, Art Nouveau vases and much more. For that legionnaire outfit — along with a gilt-handled sword and plumed helmet — hit Stand 36. To reach the market, take the Métro to Porte de Clignancourt and walk north to the Rue des Rosiers.

1:30 p.m.

### 11) JOYEUX JOËL

One of France's top artists — the culinary kind — is worshiped at [L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon](#) (5, rue de Montalembert; 33-1-42-22-56-56). Opened in 2003 by the genial star of France's most famous TV cooking show, "Bon Appétit, Bien Sûr," the sexy-smooth space upholds a purist cooking credo that eschews complex sauces and flashy side dishes. Like gastronomic ninjas, black-clad chefs sizzle and drizzle tapas-size creations like grilled sardines on melba toast with a zesty tomato spread, and an absurdly succulent lamb shoulder paired with couscous and raisins. The innovative design, which seats customers around U-shaped bars, invites schmoozing. A three-course meal for two, without drinks, is about 120 euros. Not cheap, but a side of Paris that even prim T. S. Eliot would probably succumb to.

## The Basics

For sheer hotel luxury, hit the [Plaza Athénée](#) (25, avenue Montaigne, 33-1-53-67-66-67; [www.plaza-athenee-paris.com](http://www.plaza-athenee-paris.com)). Sure, the 145 rooms are impeccably done — some in opulent Louis XVI style, some in period-perfect Art Deco accents. But the real draws are the celebrated [Alain Ducasse](#) restaurant (three Michelin stars) and the sleek V.I.P.-drenched bar. Doubles from 580 euros (\$783 at \$1.35 to the euro).

The phrase "design hotel" finds its most literal embodiment at [L'Hôtel du Petit Moulin](#) (29-31, rue du Poitou; 33-1-42-74-10-10; [www.hoteldupetitmoulin.com](http://www.hoteldupetitmoulin.com)). The 17 rooms were conceived by Christian Lacroix in a pastiche of styles, including Baroque, sci-fi and Scandinavian modern. The hotel sits amid a burgeoning fashion and design scene in the Haut-Marais neighborhood. Doubles from 180 euros.

Once the center of the bohemian scene in Montparnasse, the Hôtel Istria (29, rue Campagne Première; 33-1-43-20-91-82; [www.istria-paris-hotel.com](http://www.istria-paris-hotel.com)) has been a crash pad for Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, Rainer Maria Rilke, Erik Satie and Josephine Baker, among many others. Doubles from 145 euros.

Correction: January 7, 2007

A map with the 36 Hours column on Dec. 24 about Paris incorrectly located the Champs-Élysées. The avenue runs from the Arc de Triomphe to the Place de la Concorde, not to the Place de la République.

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