

WINTER

25 WAYS TO ENJOY
PARIS IN WINTER

THE BEST HOT CHOCOLATE

7 TIMELESS FASHION LOOKS

IS THERE A LAKE UNDER
THE PALAIS GARNIER?

ICE SKATING IN PARIS

TOP BEAUTY PRODUCTS FOR
A WINTER GLOW

MAKING THE MOST OF
THE SHOPPING SALES

reBonjour

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reBonjour

Winter in Paris

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FROM THE EDITOR

Teeth-chattering cold, runny noses, overcast skies. The sun, barely visible during the day, sets in the middle of the afternoon. Blasts of arctic air sweep down the Seine. The leafless trees appear like ghostly silhouettes against the sky.

Let's face it: winter doesn't usually inspire rapturous poems. Wrapped in wool blankets and hunched over my teapot, I usually find myself daydreaming of tropical climes, far from the freezing, lightless latitudes.

But what if winter isn't a miserable season to be endured, but a moment to embrace indoor pursuits and the life of the mind? In recent years, I've tried to lean in—slowing down the pace, reading great novels, catching up on TV series (often with a candle burning), reflecting (instead of hibernating), and literally “wintering.” I've punctuated this activity with bracing walks through Parc Montsouris and nearby forests like Fontainebleau, followed by warming bistro meals with friends. I've come to love the seasonality that makes the subsequent flower-filled Paris spring positively magical.

In fact, winter could be the best time to explore Paris. Not only do visitors find fewer crowds and cheaper prices, but it's also a city that's made for indoor exploration. A culture capital, Paris is packed with museums and monuments. The restaurants and pastry shops are places of pilgrimage for foodies flocking from all over the planet, and the music scene is a thrilling showcase of styles and genres.

Our second issue of reBonjour is a celebration of winter, the oft-maligned season. We take an artistic tour of how the Belle Époque artists depicted Paris in the snow, go underneath the Palais Garnier, and explore the history of the city's famous covered passageways, the precursor to the modern shopping mall. From ice skating and the best hot chocolate, to skincare, shopping tips and top Christmas markets, we've curated this guide to provide a bounty of seasonal inspiration.

Vive l'hiver!



BONJOUR PARIS EDITOR

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PARIS





25 WAYS TO ENJOY PARIS IN WINTER

BY ELLEN A



“Winter was come indeed bringing with it those pleasures of which the summer dreamer knows nothing...” Proust

Paris in January, February, March... the chilled and quiet months that make it possible to slip back easily into the 19th century: Proust’s world of cozy interiors, the Garnier Opera House, and delectable hearty meals.

In addition to some of the obvious pleasures of less-trammeled museum corridors, we can warm up with cognac in the plush corners of the grand hotel bars. There are teatimes, cooking classes, *les soldes*, and the music halls and restaurants of rue de la Gaîté.

Why go to Paris in the coldest months? Because it's affordable, romantic, uncrowded, and full of extraordinary surprises both indoors and outside.

Here are 25 ways to make the most of a winter trip



© Ellen A

1. Catch the lowest airfares

January through early March post some of the lowest airfares from North American cities and elsewhere. French Bee has fares hovering around \$800 roundtrip from Los Angeles, San Francisco or Newark to Paris Orly airport.

2. Choose from a greater range of hotels and apartments

To be fair, staying in Paris is never cheap, but many hotels and Airbnbs will be available at a reasonable rate, particularly for longer stays.

With an apartment, you can bring pastries, cheeses, pâté, and even whole meals from a *traiteur* back to your place to enjoy. And it's a rule that if you make the coffee, your partner goes out to get croissants in the morning!

Choose a hotel instead if you'd like assistance with reservations, transport, and directions around town. Even two-star hotels can be quite nice, but they may not have an elevator, room service, or strong wifi. Most three- and four-star hotels will have many amenities and staff who speak English. Mid-range prices per night in winter will be about \$250 to \$400/night for a double.



© Côte Montmartre

3. Stay in the center of the city

A few classic hotels to consider:

Hotel Caron de Beaumarchais (3 star) romantic French period décor in a great Marais location.

Hotel Bachaumont (4 star) elegance in the trendy 2nd arrondissement.

Or any of these well-reviewed places in the Latin Quarter:

Hotel Clément (2 star), Hotel Parc Saint Severin (4 star), Grand Hotels des Balcons (2 star) or Hotel de l'Abbaye (4 star).

For a splurge, there are enticing boutique hotels like the **celebrity-secret Hotel San Regis (5 star)** in the 8th near the Champs-Élysées, or **Le Narcisse Blanc (5 star with restaurant, pool and sauna)** in the chic 7th arrondissement.



Hostels that have both shared bunkrooms and private rooms can work for students and others on a tight budget. Try Generator in the 10th near Gare du Nord or The People – Marais in the 4th. The Hotel Chopin (2 star) in the 9th offers simple but characterful accommodation near a wax museum in one of the 19th-century passages. Or try the Hotel Pratic, a no frills spot in an excellent location on Place du Marché Ste Catherine in the Marais.

4. Book a special evening event in advance



Buy tickets in advance to the ballet, a concert, or a play you can look forward to, particularly if the event will be in a glorious setting like the Garnier Opera House.

Theatre in Paris selects shows with English translations projected above the stage, and also sells tickets to musicals and magic shows that need no translation.

Music hall theaters like the legendary Bobino and others on rue Gaité in Montparnasse (14th) are similarly welcoming for an international audience.

You don't need to understand French to enjoy a production like Opera Locos (performers singing famous arias to each other) or Black Legends (an homage to African-American music stars) at the Bobino.

5. Read a book or two set in Paris – before you go

Your appreciation of the city will be deepened by reading a good historical novel, a biography, memoir, mystery or romance – whatever genre you prefer – to set the scene and heighten your connection with Paris past and present.



6. Discover having all of Paris (nearly) to yourselves



January, February and early March are low months for tourism in general, so you won't find yourself elbowing for a table at the bistros or desperate for a ticketed time slot to visit a popular venue like the Hotel de la Marine. The streets are yours, so *flâner* to your heart's content!

7. Walk, briskly – to your own Parisian soundtrack

Stride along the length of the Tuileries Gardens in sturdy winter boots, or across Place des Vosges, and later down the Champs-Élysées. Relish being away from your daily concerns and enveloped by the winter beauty of Paris.

Add earbuds with your favorite music, and you can really take in the heart of the architecture, the history and the people. A few suggestions:

Lully (Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme)

Isham – The Moderns (Film soundtrack)

Edith Piaf (Sous les Cieux de Paris, Je Ne Regrette Rien, La Vie en Rose)

Josephine Baker (J'ai Deux Amours)

Charles Trenet (Menilmontant)

Ella Fitzgerald (I Love Paris)

Charles Aznavour (La Bohème)

Joe Dassin (Champs-Élysées)

Joni Mitchell (Free Man in Paris)

Marc Lavoine (Le Pont Mirabeau)

Zaz (Paris Sera Toujours Paris)

Orelsan with Stromae (La Pluie)



8. Vary your pleasures across each arrondissement

Whenever possible, plan several activities within a given area to limit your time in the cold and make the most of your daylight hours. Alternate indoor and outdoor pursuits, meals and snacks, but always leave room for serendipity!

A vigorous walk in the Luxembourg Gardens, for example, could be followed by either a quick bite at Treize au Jardin or a three-course lunch with soufflés at La Cuisine de Philippe, then a visit to St. Sulpice, shopping afterward at the super boutiques in the small streets of the 6th. You might visit the Louvre before or after a walk in the Tuileries, shop on rue de Rivoli, and take an afternoon drink in the comforting bar of the Hotel Regina.



The historic Palais Royal archways and striped Buren columns are great settings for some memorable photos, followed by breakfast or lunch upstairs at Café Kitsuné (2, place André Malraux location), or a glass of Côtes du Rhône and a snack at Willi's Wine Bar.



Alternatively, perhaps you'll lunch at the Michelin-starred Restaurant Palais Royal, or at Bistrot Valois of "Emily in Paris" fame, then stroll through the Galerie Vivienne and over to the circular Place des Victoires where Louis XIV rides a spirited horse.

9. Visit Museums, of course....

Imagine being able to get close (not too close!) to your favorite Van Gogh at the Orsay or having time to contemplate a Mondrian at the Pompidou.



Winter is also a super time to visit Paris's smaller and less well-known museums. (Reservations online are recommended, sometimes mandatory). But try some that are different!

10. See the Circus!

Les Folies Gruss – A special horse circus show in the Bois du Boulogne. Some packages offer a meal or a chance to meet the horses and human performers.

Cirque d'Hiver Bouglione, 110 rue Amelot, 11th. Entertaining physical feats and humor suitable for all ages.



11. Visit contemporary art galleries and artists

Art galleries abound in Paris, so look for those representing the style of contemporary art you prefer. Place des Vosges and rue de Seine have a number of galleries.

You may also enjoy visiting the artists' studios open to the public at 59 rue de Rivoli, or in the Centquatre-Paris cultural center (5 rue Curial in the 19th).

12. SHOP!

Les Soldes – Paris's biggest half-yearly sales are held from mid January to early February. You'll see progressive discounts at most of the big department stores.

Of course there are all types of luxury and specialty shops in Paris as well. Vintage clothing shops abound in the Marais.



Look for tea at Mariage Frères or cooking utensils at E. Dehillerin for gifts. And don't forget that many chocolate and cheese shops can specially pack products for you to take back on the plane.

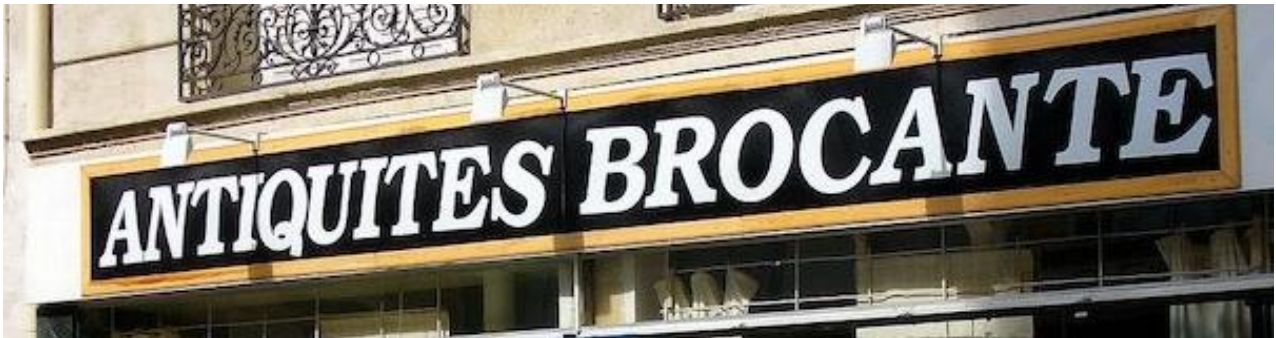
Chocolate shops of note: Jean-Paul Hévin, A La Mere de Famille, Patrick Roger, Debaube & Gallais

Cheese shops: Quatrehomme, Androuet, Anne Marie Cantin



© Shutterstock

13. Bargain for vintage finds at the brocantes



Online sites like brocabrac.fr can give you dates for upcoming itinerant *brocantes* selling mostly antiques, porcelain, old postcards and art.

The *brocantes* pop up in white tents lining Paris's boulevards or canals throughout the winter, with booths selling hot mulled wine and snacks to tide you over as you think about those bronze bookends. Be quick!

14. Wine and cheese tasting

Ô Château at 68, rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the 1st, offers different packages for their educational and entertaining wine tastings, some paired with cheese.



You might also look for Airbnb experiences and other private chef tours that can introduce you to the wine or cheese of your dreams. In wintertime, Brie de Meaux, Fourme d'Ambert (bleu), Banon (goat cheese in chestnut leaf), and Mont d'Or are standouts.

15. Enjoy cafes and brasseries at any hour

Most of those popular cafes that were jammed with visitors in the spring or summer will now have free tables. More folks will be eating inside as outdoor heaters have been banned. Look for hearty winter fare on the daily menus, like *oeufs meurette*, *hachis parmentier*, *cassoulet*, and *tartiflette*.



16. Warm up in Tearooms and Coffee shops

There's no harm in stopping for coffee or tea, even several times a day, in cold weather. Paris now boasts dozens of great custom-brewed coffee shops like Coutume and La Caf  oth  que.

The tearooms typically offer light savory fare at lunchtime and always something sweet. Some favorites:

Queen Ann (5, rue Simon le Franc, 4th) for inventive quiches and delectable desserts in a half-timbered room.

Mariage Frères – Classic tea purveyors with three locations in Paris where you can sip one of hundreds of their tea varieties while having brunch or dessert, then buy some to take home in their iconic black canisters.



Carette – An elegant long room on the north side of Place des Vosges, Carette is equally a pleasant place for tea and finger sandwiches, or to share a bottle of champagne with friends later in the day.



17. Explore hotel lounges and bars for tea, a glass of wine or a cocktail

A few of the palace hotels have become so security conscious that you practically need a reservation to just go in to have a drink at the bar, but many still welcome walk-ins, like the charming Hotel de l'Abbaye on the Left Bank, where you may find the fire lit on a cold day, and the elegant Hotel Regina on the Right Bank near the Louvre whose handsome "English Bar" is tailored with wood and red velvet.



18. Take a cooking class in English

Take home a taste of Paris by learning to make real butter croissants and a baguette in a baking class, or several classic sauces and a great vinaigrette in a small group class. Some half-day classes begin with shopping at a street market with the chef, then making a lunch that all share together.

La Cuisine, 80 quai de l'Hôtel de Ville, 4th

Cook'n with Class, 6 rue Baudelique, 18th



© Fragonard

19. Learn how to create a perfume

Book ahead for perfume workshops where you can take your own creation home:

Fragonard – at the Musée du Parfum – 3-5 Square de l’Opéra-Louis Jovet, 9th (95 euros)

Le Studio des Parfums – 7 rue des Francs Bourgeois, 4th arr. (95 to 320 euros)

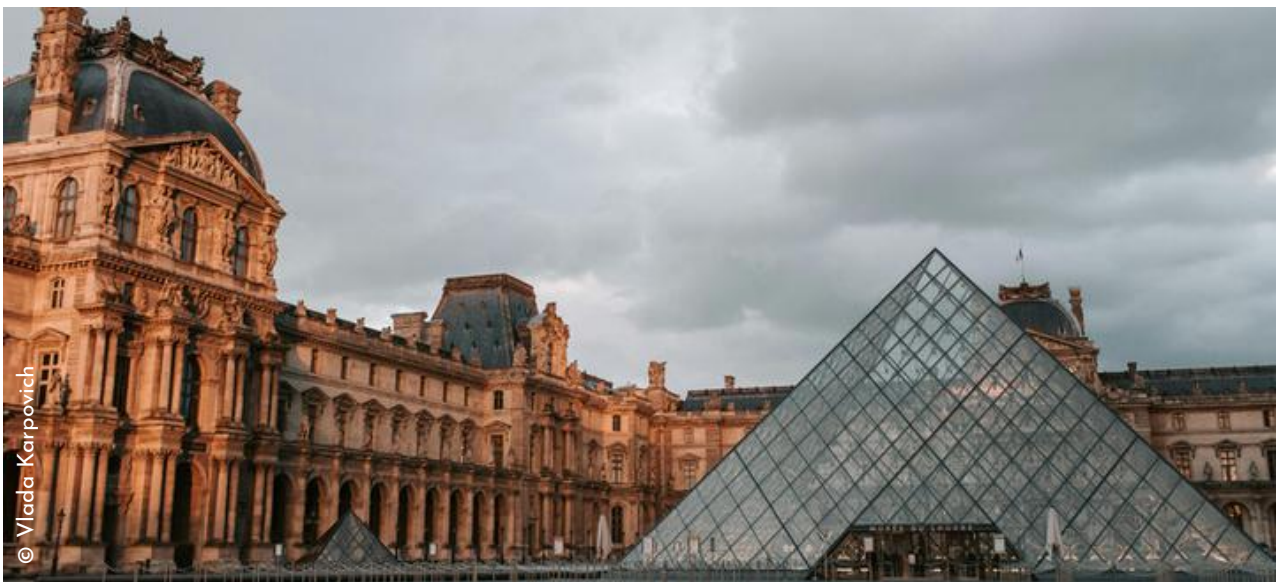


20. Ride the metro line 6 from one end to the other

Beginning perhaps at Étoile, the metro closest to the Arc de Triomphe, try to sit or stand near the windows of this popular line so you can see the Eiffel Tower as you cross the Seine, then skim over the cafés and traffic of several quarters of the Left Bank. Line 6 switches from underground darkness to broad daylight, in some places passing within just a few meters of the elegant cut stone apartment buildings. On your way back, stop off at Bir Hakeim metro to walk out onto the steel-columned bridge immortalized in Christopher Nolan's film *Inception*.

21. Take outdoor photos in the brilliant winter light

Bare tree branches don't block the views – long vistas along the Seine and through the parks. Catch golden light on the south side of the Haussmannian buildings in the afternoon. The Louvre pyramid makes a great backdrop, as does the Eiffel Tower in photos taken from Trocadéro plaza.



22. Enjoy Nighttime Music – Jazz, Classical & New Bands

The evenings are long but lively in winter. Music never stops. Classical concerts are held in many of the beautiful churches and chapels like the Madeleine and St. Germain des Près, some by candlelight.

Some jazz clubs like Chez Papa (3 rue Saint Benoit, 6th) and night spots with a variety of piano, song and cabaret like Aux Trois Mailletz (56 rue Galande, 5th) also serve delicious meals.

For more contemporary music, with bands like Avions, Eggs and Normcore, try places like l'International at 5 rue Moret, 11th.



© Flickr PeterTea

23. Gambling!

“Fancy a flutter?” as some Brits say. Paris is a great place to dress up a bit and play James Bond at the gambling tables.



Poker and Punto Banco are popular at Le Club Barrière at 104 Champs-Élysées. The Club Montmartre at 84, rue de Clichy in the 9th arrondissement is an attractive venue to play in as well.

24. Go to the Movies

To see some of the best new French films with the benefit of English subtitles, look for the schedule of films sponsored in various Paris movie houses by entrepreneur Manon and her friends at Lost in Frenchlation. Some of the showings include appearances and discussion with the directors.

And of course, there are many films in English (advertised as “version originale” – V.O.) at Paris’s first run theaters and revival movie houses.



25. Have late night talks of great importance

With your loved ones, or with a stranger, there is no better place than Paris in wintertime for those long conversations that may change your life. Allow yourself the time to discover what really matters to you and the people you care about. That's also a gift to bring home.

And perhaps, it will snow...

There's only a slim chance that it will be cold enough to snow while you are in Paris, but if it does, you will never forget it. Reason enough to book your next trip in winter!



© Ellen A



Noël à la Française

CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS WITH
MY FRENCH FAMILY

BY PRNOTI BAGLARY



I moved from India to France five years ago. Not to sound dramatic, but trying to find a semblance of home in a new-to-you country can leave you with more than a few scrapes and bruises. Despite the cultural barriers (or maybe because of it), French food was my salve, as well as my entry point to connect to French culture and people, including my in-laws.

I now have a theory that I am almost certain is true: if you love food, and are curious about food, you'll get along fine with French people! And what better way to get to know the French than by breaking bread with them during holiday festivities?

As elsewhere, each family probably has their own distinct traditions and quirks that makes the day meaningful for them. Here I'll try to give you a peek into how we have celebrated Noël with my husband's family over the past couple of years.

Christmas with the In-Laws

As someone with no reference to Christmas before moving to France, but plenty of experience in joyous celebrations (I mean I come from the land of Holi and Diwali), I was prepared for my first Christmas dinner a couple of years ago. My rusty French notwithstanding, I was well-rested, hydrated and more importantly, hungry. The last one is probably the most vital

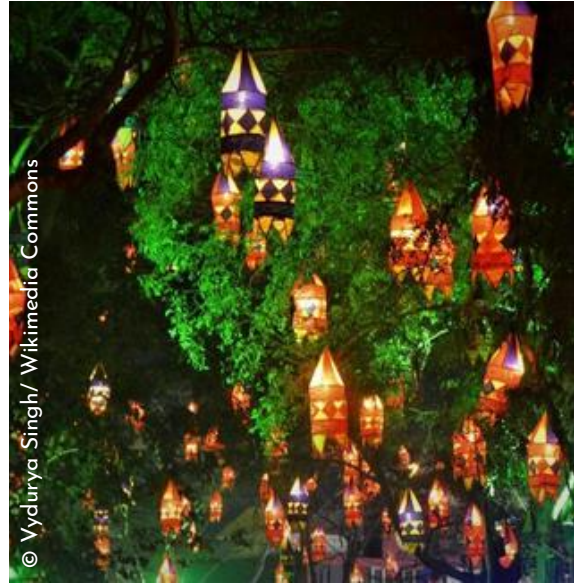


prerequisite for any family celebration. “There’ll be a lot of food,” my husband warned me. “A lot,” he repeated, for added measure.

Like most celebrations in France, much of this day centers around meals. The prime locus for it all is the dinner table, and of course the Christmas tree. Though Christianity is still the dominant religion in France, many French people prefer to describe themselves as secular. Perhaps this is why Christmas itself is seen more as a joyous occasion to get together as a family, rather than a religious festival (at least that’s the case with my in-laws).

Over the years, I have also asked many of my French friends about what Christmas traditions they follow with their family, and invariably, the answer always involves food. So, if this article sounds more like “what I eat during Christmas in France,” you know why!

Also note that different regions in France have their own special dish associated with the holidays. As is well-known, the French are extremely proud of their *terroir*, hence many variations on different courses can be found in different regions of France.



Being from the Ariège region in the south of France, my husband's family are hearty *Ariégeois*. While the region might be less sophisticated than nearby Bordeaux or not as cool as Marseille, it makes up for it with the beauty of the Pyrénées mountains, and the deliciousness of its produce.



Le Réveillon de Noël: The Big Feast

In France, the majority of festivities takes place on Le Réveillon de Noël or Christmas Eve, rather than on Christmas Day. So, the main meal is the Christmas Eve dinner. Here's what's on a standard Christmas Eve dinner menu in France:

Entrée en plusieurs étapes

The most traditional appetizers for a French Christmas meal are seafood, foie gras and charcuterie. Seafood usually consists of oysters and prawns.



© lleewuu/Flickr

The first time I tasted *foie gras*, its cold, salty taste was simultaneously one of the most interesting and revolting things I had tried until that point in life. I guess it didn't help to know that this buttery paste is made of fattened goose liver. I have since come around to acquiring a taste for it.

I can see why so many French still hold it dear to their heart. It is one of those foods the French eat to mark special occasions. As such the memory-associations with *foie gras* ever since childhood, means that it transcends to the realm of cherished delicacy. So much so that vegan French have created *faux gras*.

Personally, for me too, it's not something I would crave, but something I enjoy sharing in family gatherings or while celebrating a special occasion with friends.

Foie gras can be served on regular bread, or more festive breads with raisins or currants: the sweetness of the vessel complementing the salty umami of the *foie gras*. A crack of fresh black pepper and/or *fleur de sel* up top, and the perfect bite of *foie gras* is ready!

Mais attention: foie gras is never to be spread like butter. That's apparently the quickest way to offend a table full of French. Don't ask me why. I don't make the rules...



© Robin/ Flickr

To finish off, there's the charcuterie, made up of a wide assortment of cold cuts, served with *cornichons*, tiny pickled cucumbers. With my family, we usually get whatever cold cuts look good to eat at the farmer's market that week. The first course is to be served with Champagne or white wine.

Among non-traditional appetizers, my family incorporates Indian dishes in the mix. It's my in-laws' way of celebrating my heritage. So, much to the surprise of many, dishes such as masala chicken or Indian-style vegetable fritters will be served for the *dîner de Noël* or any other celebratory dinner.



Plat

The most traditional food to eat for the main course on Christmas is *le chapon farci* or stuffed capon, a poultry bird that's way bigger than a chicken.



The stuffing for the *chapon* would differ according to taste and region, but could include everything from basic onion and herbs, to the decadent *foie gras*! Yes, things can escalate very fast.

The bird is slathered with a blend of butter, minced garlic and herbs like thyme, rosemary, and sage, along with salt and pepper. My mother-in-law usually prepares *chapon* stuffed with the classic French trinity of onion, shallots and celery, plus garlic, chestnuts and bread to soak in all the delicious juices. Roasted on a bed of more chestnuts and winter vegetables like carrots, potatoes and butternut, it's the perfect plate of winter comforts. Of course, *le jus de viande* or meat sauce is whisked up, using the juices and sticky bits from the roast meat, which is then deglazed with wine and whipped up into a thick sauce, to be poured all over, well, everything on my plate.

Coupled with a well-bodied red wine, this is the highlight of the whole meal. And, needless to say, it's delicious! For some members of our family, eating a leafy salad before or after the main course is almost a given. It's usually lettuce or rocket or some other greens, topped with a splash of olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Since I am yet to become a salad person, I have to confess, this is not the most exciting part of the meal for me.

Fromage et Dessert



Since we are in France, cheese towards the end of the meal is obvious. This too would change according to region and taste. In our family, it is typical to take a break between the cheese course and the dessert to open presents. Stuffed and happy, we all set off finding out what Père Noël (Santa Claus) brought us. Once everything has been opened, and some more space created in our bellies, we sit down to continue the dinner, and enjoy the quintessential Christmas dessert, *la bûche de Noël*, accompanied by Champagne.

Bûche de Noël literally translates to “log of Christmas” or the Yule log. It is a cylindrical dessert, made by folding sponge cake into the shape of a log, in different flavors such as chocolate, *crème aux marrons* (chestnut paste) or what have you. You can also find *bûche de Noël* made of ice-cream.



© Ziel / Wikipedia Commons

After the meal, some families go for the Midnight Mass. I haven't been to one yet, so that's definitely something I would like to experience.




© Bubamara / Wikimedia commons

This year, my husband and I are looking forward to hosting Christmas Eve dinner at our home. While we will honor French culinary traditions for the Christmas feast, we're also planning to add Indian dishes, such as grilled *paneer*, an Indian cheese, served with fresh mint chutney as an appetizer, and *kheer*, an Indian rice pudding made with milk, nuts and raisins. After all, what is a festive family meal, if not an occasion to share our stories? And for many of us, there is no better way to express it but through the foods we cook for the people we love.

I wish you a joyous Christmas with lots of good foods, and more importantly, the company of people you love.





“What good is the warmth of
summer, without the cold of
winter to give it sweetness?”

– John Steinbeck



© masatoshi/Wikimedia Commons

You’ve probably seen the viral videos: thick, velvety hot chocolate being poured over a cloud of whipped cream, the glossy liquid slowly swallowing it whole. The decadence alone is enough to stop you mid-scroll. French *chocolat chaud* is not your average hot cocoa. It’s richer, denser, and less sweet, yet infinitely more indulgent than its British or American counterparts. Forget powders and sachets; this is often pure melted chocolate, sipped rather than gulped. It coats your mouth in chocolatey bliss and is simply the perfect drink for this time of year.

Decoding the Menu

Chocolat chaud à l’ancienne— literally “old-fashioned hot chocolate.” This traditional French version is thick and rich, made by melting high-quality dark chocolate (often 70% or higher cocoa content) with milk or cream. The result is deeply intense and far less sweet than the versions you might know, allowing the flavor of the cocoa to shine.

Chocolat Viennois — the same decadent drink, but crowned with a generous swirl of *chantilly* cream: pillowy, whipped, and luxurious.

As a Brit, I was used to the watery type of hot chocolate made with Cadbury's Instant Hot Chocolate. But when I finally tried the viral *Chocolat Viennois*, everything changed. It was exactly what I'd hoped for – luxurious, rich, and comforting. Personally, I lean toward darker chocolate, so some of the sweeter, cream-topped versions can be a little much for me. But still, there's something undeniably irresistible about that first spoonful. The warmth, the texture, the slow melt of chocolate meeting cream. Perfection.



The Classics: Parisian Institutions

The following four are among the most famous – and most photographed – spots for *chocolat chaud* in Paris. The spots that have definitely appeared on your Instagram. Each is a Parisian institution, steeped in history and old-world charm. The price tag reflects the setting, but you're paying as much for the ambience as for the chocolate itself...

Carette

Chocolat Carette with Chantilly cream – €13.50

Served in elegant surroundings on Place des Vosges or Trocadéro, Carette's *chocolat chaud* is indulgent yet balanced. The thick cream slowly melts into the chocolate, creating that perfect Parisian moment of luxury.



Angelina

Classic or White Hot Chocolate (served with whipped cream) – €10.50

Angelina's *Chocolat chaud à l'ancienne* is legendary – so thick you almost need a spoon. The white version is a sweeter alternative. It's touristy, yes, but stepping inside feels like entering another era of Parisian glamour (and the bottled version makes for the perfect souvenir!)



© Angelina



Les Deux Magots

Chocolat chaud à l'ancienne – “Pot de chocolat des Deux Magots” €11

With whipped cream – €14

At this mythical Saint-Germain café, the hot chocolate is as storied as the clientele who once frequented it – Sartre, Hemingway, and Picasso among them. As such, this is the most expensive hot chocolate, but it is rich, unctuous, and deeply traditional.

Café de Flore

Special Flore dark hot chocolate – €9.50

With whipped cream – €11.50

Just next door, Café de Flore offers a slightly lighter, silkier version. Served with a separate glass of whipped cream, it's beautifully presented. The ambience is unbeatable, though be prepared for crowds of tourists snapping photos under the cream awnings.



Beyond the Icons

Paris's passion for *chocolat chaud* extends far beyond its most famous cafés. Around the city, independent chocolate makers and specialty shops are reimagining the classic drink – often focusing on sustainability and ethical sourcing. You'll skip the queues and discover something far more personal...



Dengo

€6.90 (medium) / €8.90 (large) + €1 for whipped cream

An ethical chocolate brand with Brazilian roots, Dengo lets you choose from several chocolate bases. At this time of year, the *Feliz Natal* blend is my favorite, infused with Christmas spices.

Ara Chocolat

€5.50 takeaway / €6.50 on-site

Entirely dairy-free and made with pure cocoa, Ara's hot chocolate is a revelation. "Water-based and with our grand Ara chocolates from Latin America," they say. It's proof that simplicity can be just as decadent.



Plaq Chocolat

€4.50 (small) / €8 (medium) + €1 whipped cream

At Plaq, you can choose between two preparations: the *eau* version (pure and intense) or the *lait* version (softer, more creamy). Both are exquisite. Minimalist yet luxurious, this is modern Parisian chocolate at its finest.



Charles Chocolatier

“Chocolat chaud à l’ancienne” – €6.60 + €1 whipped cream

For those who crave a thicker, darker drink, this one delivers. Slightly bitter, never cloying, and served with two of the house’s artisanal chocolates. A true chocolatier’s creation.



Rrraw Cacao Factory

Organic, vegan, and fair trade, Rrraw is more than a chocolate shop – it's a small factory and educational space dedicated to bean-to-bar chocolate. The friendly staff will walk you through their sustainable process, from harvest to cup. A guilt-free indulgence that tastes as good as its story.

Whether in a gilded Belle Époque salon or a minimalist cacao workshop, *chocolat chaud* in Paris is an experience in itself. It's comfort in a cup, a ritual of indulgence that captures the heart of Paris itself.



© Shutterstock



Angelina

A MECCA FOR HOT CHOCOLATE LOVERS

BY LOUI FRANKE

Paris is a haven for chocolate lovers. Considering the eye candy at every corner of this lovely city, it is impossible to keep track of the many wonderful things to discover. Chocolate is just one more Parisian treasure and as the temperatures begin to drop *le chocolat chaud* is at the top of the list.

Imagine sipping a hot chocolate while walking through the Tuileries Garden on a brisk day be it morning, afternoon or evening. And with the renowned Angelina directly across from the Tuileries on rue de Rivoli, it need not be a fantasy—and you can bypass the lines and get a *chocolat chaud* to go. The fact that hot chocolate at Angelina’s is one of the best in Paris is not surprising because the family that established the restaurant has roots in Eastern Europe where thick, sumptuous hot chocolate is a staple.

The history behind this Parisian landmark began when the Rumpelmeyer family emigrated from the then multinational realm of Austria-Hungary to settle in the Côte d’Azur region in the south of France. In the late 1800s, the Rumpelmeyers had nostalgic



thoughts about the teahouses they left behind and decided to open their own in Nice. This proved to be a successful venture and they followed with teahouses in Monte Carlo and Antibes. Building on these successes, in 1903, the Rumpelmeyers opened the now-famous Parisian landmark Angelina.



The Dutch-born architect Edouard-Jean Niermans was commissioned to decorate the interior that remains unaltered to this day. Its entrance appears modern with delicate, bright, airy, unassuming touches that beautifully display the signature pastries and chocolates. The interior looks like a traditional teahouse—pleasant, understated yet refined and elegant. There are marble-topped tables and lots of mirrors that give the dining area a larger-than-life feeling and enhance its many decorative flourishes.

Originally, this teahouse on rue de Rivoli opened as Rumpelmeyer. However, in 1930, owner Antoine Rumpelmeyer changed the name to that of his daughter-in-law, Angelina.

The prince of hot chocolates is *le chocolat chaud à l'ancienne l'Africain* (old-fashioned hot chocolate called “The African”). You will be served a cup and saucer along with a pitcher of steamy, hot

chocolate so thick and creamy that if it were a tad thicker it would be classified a pudding. To add to this decadent treat, fresh whipped cream is served on the side along with a glass and *une carafe d'eau*.

If this is your first time, you must try its mouthwatering signature pastry, the famous Mont Blanc—a very simple *pâtisserie*, composed of cream of chestnut, *fromage blanc* (a soft fresh type of cream cheese) and *meringue*. The exact recipe remains a secret, but together these ingredients give the pastry a sort of crunchy yet creamy texture.



Angelina’s servers are known to be courteous and unhurried, which is a nice plus for a popular destination.

Coco Chanel was regularly seated at table #10. Reportedly, she was a daily customer just for the hot chocolate. The table is positioned next to one of the mirrors and her biographers have written how Mme Chanel loved mirrors and used them to coyly keep an eye on the world around her.



© Maurice Utrillo

HOW BELLE ÉPOQUE ARTISTS PORTRAYED PARIS IN WINTER

BY HAZEL SMITH



Paris in wintertime has a unique beauty. Under the grip of cold, its historic architecture glowers under heavy skies of violet and gray, but under a blanket of snow, Paris becomes a different town. Parisians can't help but be thrilled by this rare event. Hushed, the first snowfall leaves everything crisp and clean. The refreshed cityscape reflects new light and colors. Once upon a time, when snow rendered the Paris streets with a white brush, the painters from the Belle Époque tried to capture the fleeting phenomenon on their canvases.

In the 21st century, snow is just as magical, but infrequent. Paris averages seven to eight snow days per year, and accumulating snow is even more uncommon. When it does snow, it often melts quickly due to the city's mild, oceanic climate, and the snowy layer

only stays put for a day or two. Snowfall is most likely from January to March, but not impossible in December.

Gustave Caillebotte's large painting *View of Roofs: Effects of Snow* reveals his enthusiasm for this meteorological phenomenon. Inspired by the impressive snowfall of December 1878, viewers sense perfectly the quiet, snowy morning represented in Caillebotte's blanketed roofs; the houses are still asleep under the low gray sky. The only touch of color is the terracotta pink of the chimney pots. These old buildings may have been painted from the back rooms at Caillebotte's apartment at 31 Boulevard Haussmann, which overlooked a yet-to-be refurbished area.



Caillebotte joined the ranks of the Impressionists in 1876 and became one of the group's most active members, both as a painter and as a patron, thanks to a considerable personal fortune. In the era in which he was active, Caillebotte's snowy painting was considered a modern urban landscape.

“...the top floor of the hotel where I worked, in a room that looked across all the roofs and the chimneys of the high hill of the quarter, was a pleasure. The fireplace drew well in the room and it was warm and pleasant to work.” Ernest Hemingway, A Moveable Feast.

Jean Béraud is defined as an Impressionist, but his work is more traditional and realistic than many of his contemporaries. Béraud told the story of Paris in his highly anecdotal paintings that depicted the Parisian bourgeoisie and essential stereotypes found on the city's streets. When the snow fell, Béraud didn't want the starkness of Caillebotte; he picked a lively boulevard as seen in *Parisienne, sur la Place de la Concorde*, circa 1890. The subject is a young woman in motion, animated compared to the plodding parade of men in the background.

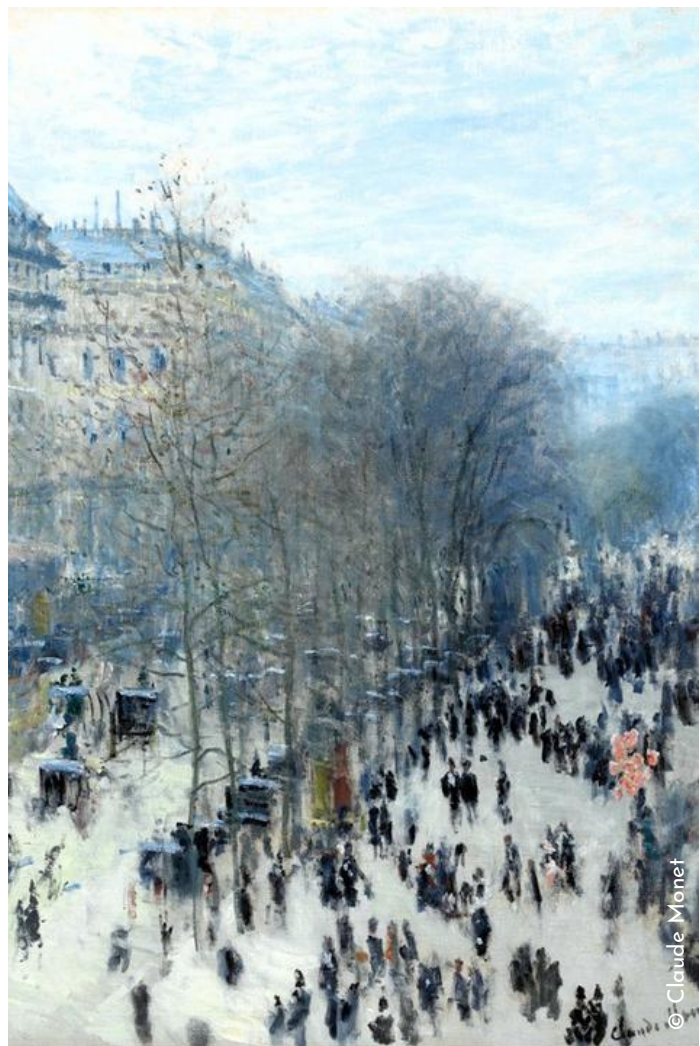
Black, off-white and gray, the only color in this work is the pink ribbon on the woman's parcel, which we hope contains a cake or another splendid scarf. This and other works by Béraud can be seen at the Musée Carnavalet, a good place to spend a wintry day.



"If you choose not to find joy in the snow, you will have less joy in your life but still the same amount of snow." Colette.

Claude Monet was fascinated by winter and the colors created by snow and ice. Monet captured over 100 snow scenes. Whenever it snowed in the 1870s and 80s, Monet quickly grabbed his art supplies, and braved the harsh conditions, knowing the snowy makeover was a fleeting one. Monet didn't use just flat, white strokes, but tiny touches of prismatic color to indicate the shadows and light on the snow. The casual eye may at first fail to recognize that the shades of white, blue, and violet Monet used were accurate - but they are.

Monet's *Boulevard des Capucines* painted late December 1873 presented a genuine glimpse of the hustle and bustle of Parisian life on a winter afternoon. Sketched from the studio of Monet's friend, the photographer Felix Nadar, Monet painted bare trees, the roofs, streets, and facades swept with snow. His quick brushstrokes created the "impression" of people alive with movement.



From December 14 to December 23, 1874, the weather was exceptionally snowy in the Ile-de-France. This heavy snow caused the roof of a market to collapse on December 18, resulting in casualties. Paris and the surrounding area were paralyzed by snow and all transport stopped.

While stranded in his village of Argenteuil, in the outskirts of Paris, Monet painted the snow-quilted streets. Here in *Snow at Argenteuil*, areas of this canvas are painted in the expected blues and greys, the application of small strokes of yellow, green, and red wakes up the painting and even creates a little warmth. Most of Monet's pictures from the winter of 1874–1875 were painted from locations close to his house on the Boulevard Saint-Denis (now number 21 boulevard Karl Marx). The house is now an immersive museum about the painter, open Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays during the winter season.



“One winter he [Manet] wanted to paint a snow scene. I had in my possession just such a piece from Monet. After seeing it, he said, “It is perfect! I would not know how to do better,” whereupon he gave up painting snow.” Theodore Duret, art dealer, 1879

Despite Renoir’s strong dislike of the cold and snow, he braved the winter of 1868 to create *Skaters in the Bois de Boulogne* – one of Renoir’s few winter works. The painting depicts a snowscape with Parisians spending their precious free time on a frozen lake in the Bois de Boulogne. Newspaper accounts recorded freezing temperatures allowing the curious to walk across the Seine and skate on rivers and streams.

This painting has an unfinished, sketch-like quality to it, which to my eye looks more like the work of Monet, because of the black licks of paint.



Parisians took advantage of freezing temperatures to skate outdoors, on ponds and on the Seine. After 1894, winter skating took place at the Palais de Glace on the Champs-Élysées. Apart from skating, it was a place to see and be seen. This poster by Jules Chéret is just one of many he made to celebrate the skating palace.



The winter of 1885-86 was an especially snowy one in Paris. In December, there were two snowfalls of more than four inches, and a blizzard hit the city on January 8, 1886. In *Snow, Boulevard de Clichy*, Paul Signac's budding pointillist technique is excellent for rendering snow. It positively animates the scene. Art critic Jean Ajalbert colorfully described Signac's snowy painting thus, "on the Boulevard Clichy the swirling blizzard coats the houses, trees and streetcars with snow. The lilac mauve and violet landscape turns opalescent in the distance." The painting is housed in the Minneapolis Institute of Art.



"I like snow and roses, calm and storm; I like to love, I like to hate. Every contradiction, every absurdity, every folly—I harbor them all." - Gustave Flaubert



© Paul Gauguin

Early in his career, Gauguin uncharacteristically showed enthusiasm for painting snow scenes, yet his eventual choice to move to the tropics suggests he was tired of the cold and poverty of Europe. Throughout December 1879, Paris was inundated with snow for much of the month. One of the coldest winters for the city, the record for lowest temperature of $-23.9\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($-11.0\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$) on 10 December 1879, still stands. In *La Neige à Vaugirard II*, is Gauguin representing the tranquility and calm of a winter landscape, or the bleak and bitter mid-winter?



In 1894, after his return from his first Tahitian voyage, Gauguin caught another snowy day. *Winter Landscape* shows the view from the artist's window. Gauguin rented rooms on the second floor of a building in the Montparnasse area of Paris. Newspapers reported that it snowed on 24 February 1894, so he probably made the painting around that date. We can see just how much Gauguin's palette has changed – it's warmer. The painting was given to Jo Bongor, Theo Van Gogh's widow and Vincent's sister-in-law, in May of that year.

“The life of Paris was now found along the boulevards. No longer were residents traveling in a labyrinthine maze of small, medieval streets. Now fashionably dressed men and women spent their afternoons walking through the park, or strolling along the fashionable boulevards.” – Henry Bacon, “Glimpses of Parisian Art,” Scribner’s Monthly, December 1880

The art of Eugène Galien-Laloue may be considered kitschy, but he certainly was a prolific popularizer of Paris street scenes, garish and sentimental though they might be. Galien-Lalou usually painted in autumn or winter, unusual for a young painter who did not like to work *en plein air*; in fact he “hated to walk in any mud and even a blade of grass bothered him.”

Galien-Laloue rendered every detail of *fin-de-siècle* Parisian architecture with absolute precision. One of Galien-Laloue’s favorite subjects was the l’Eglise de la Madeleine, the huge Roman temple of a neo-classical church that Napoleon commissioned. Here in *Place de la Madeleine, Marche aux Fleurs*, the artist gives us the temple in winter, with Parisians scurrying past the huge Doric columns.



© Eugène Galien-Laloue

The countryside in winter particularly attracted Arthur Sisley who often presented villages and gardens hushed by the snow. Sisley's *Snow at Louveciennes* creates a lonely feeling; one small, isolated character walks down a snow-covered disappearing into the background.



For the same reasons as Monet, Sisley liked painting snow scenes because it allowed him to study the variations in light and to use different ranges of shades. Dashes of blue and grey create shadows and texture underfoot, in the seemingly impenetrable snow.

“When old Winter puts his blank face to the glass, I shall close all my shutters, pull the curtains tight, and build me stately palaces by candlelight.” – Charles Baudelaire

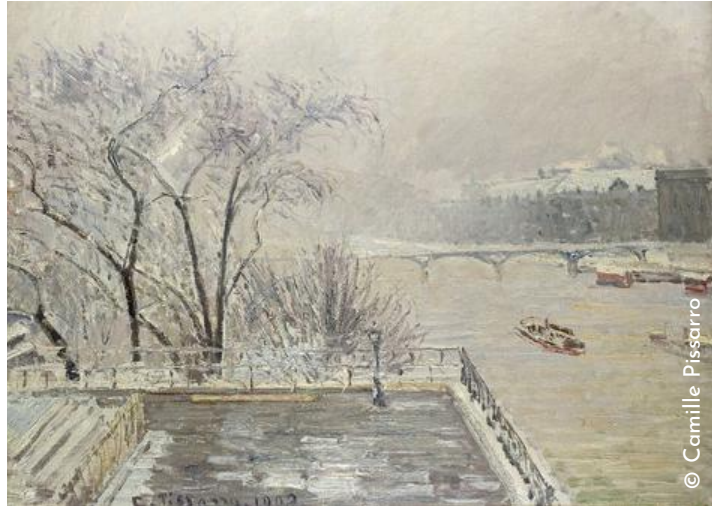
Odo Dobrowolski was a Polish national who lived in Paris in the years before World War I. In an almost photo-realistic style, he accurately describes a snowy boulevard in Paris, just as Parisians made their way home to their warm, lighted homes.

The famous author Émile Zola became an avid photographer in the 1890s. Here he has photographed Place de Clichy with the Monument to Marshall Moncey in the background. Unfortunately, the snow has turned into a slurry of slush. As Zola died under suspicious circumstances in September of 1902, this photo would have been taken between 1894 and 1901.



© Émile Zola

The Seine Viewed from the Pont Neuf, Winter 1902 is a wintry scene created by Camille Pissarro in the early months of 1902. It's one of a series of views painted from his apartment at 28 Place Dauphine on



the Ile-de-la-Cité. Here Pissarro is looking west along the Seine toward the Pont-des-Arts and the Louvre. The railings and steps on the left indicate where the statue of Henri IV stands above the Square du Vert-Galant. The painting shows Pissarro's fascination with the effect of transient weather, but he has contained these within a carefully structured, accurate view of the Seine.

When Maurice Utrillo found purpose in his chaotic life he became a more famous and lucrative painter than his mother, the one-time artists' model Suzanne Valadon. He was able to fashion a comfortable life because his plain, naïve cityscapes of Montmartre were popular with foreign collectors who simply wanted classy souvenirs of Paris. Utrillo went through a white period, when his lavish use of zinc white, sometimes with the addition of plaster, lent itself to snow paintings. His painting of the steep *Passage Cottin* shows his neighbors dealing with the snow, and steep streets near Sacré-Cœur.

Paris can be challenging in the winter, but always charming. Put on your boots, because even in the winter, Paris is always a good idea.



© Jonathan Mabey / Unsplash

7 TIMELESS WINTER LOOKS FOR PARIS

BY ANNE MCCARTHY



©Dan Gold / Unsplash

A chill is in the air in Paris, which means cozy, chic fashions are filling the streets. Among many things, what the French do well is timeless fashion – looks that are style-driven, not trend-driven. Someone like Josephine Baker, the Missouri-born French artist and icon who entered the Panthéon in 2021, embodied this so well with her stunning, over-the-top dresses, which would be just as stylish today as they were in the 1920s in Paris.

Here are seven timeless winter looks to cultivate when you're roaming the streets of Paris this winter season or sipping on a *café au lait* at the local café, or simply curling up at home with a good book. After all, who better to dress up for than yourself? When in Paris, do as the French do: Look good, and make it look effortless. You can achieve that by stocking your closet with these looks.

A Cozy Sweater Dress

A cozy sweater dress is my go-to winter favorite because it's not occasion-specific. You can wear a sweater dress to your Zoom work meeting with colleagues or throw it on for a date night at a trendy restaurant in the 11th arrondissement. However and whenever you wear it, make a sweater dress look distinctly your own by selecting your favorite color, throwing on heels or combat boots or sneakers, and adding a splash of color to your nails to create an epic and timeless look.

For those who are expecting, a stretchy sweater dress affords lots of room for the ever-growing bun in the oven, and provides cozy comfort for the final months.



A Long Wool Coat

The idea of a long wool coat in Paris may conjure images for you of Ludwig Bemelmans' Madeline and the long yellow coats worn by the girls under the watchful eye of Miss Clavel. But opt for something a bit sleeker and of a darker color, and you'll have an evergreen piece in your wardrobe which will last decades. If price isn't much of a consideration, splurge for a high quality, more costly coat. It's an investment piece, without a doubt. This said, budget-friendly shops like H&M have long, wool-blend coats which are just as good as anything you'd find as a fancy department store.

While darker coat colors pair well with almost anything, there's also no denying that a fresh pop of a spring-like color, like a robin egg blue, will brighten and warm up even the chilliest of January days.



Black Blazer & Trousers

A sleek, classic black blazer is the perfect Parisian accompaniment to a pair of ankle-skimming jeans or trousers, paired with stiletto boots or flat boots or Chuck Taylors. This everyday outfit is ideal for any occasion, and can be dressed up at the end of the day by throwing on some statement-making earrings or a bold red lip.



A Chic Pantsuit



You hear the word “pantsuit” and may think of something outdated from the 80s or an image from a stuffy boardroom where the women feel they need to dress as men. Pantsuits have come a long way since women began wearing them and they look more timeless – and sexier – than ever.

An understatedly sexy pantsuit is the perfect silhouette for soaking up all that Paris has to offer during wintertime. Play around with pantsuit fabrics, too – opt for denim, satin, or even velvet, to really dial up the “wow” factor.

Long Skirt Paired with a Sweater

For those lowkey days when you're running errands around the City of Light, a long midi-style skirt paired with a structured or flouncy sweater is the perfect go-to. For your feet, heeled boots or smart-looking sneakers are the way to go.



A Daring Mini skirt or Mini Dress

The French know there's no age limit on sex appeal or high hemlines, and for that, they're ahead of the curve. Defying ageist gender stereotypes and patriarchal societal expectations is fun, and wearing a super-short dress for as long as you want to is one of the ways to enjoy that sense of fun.

This said, for the French, wearing what you want – and looking damn good while doing it – is old hat; it's to be expected. A chic short dress or mini skirt paired with black tights is an excellent winter uniform that you can enjoy, regardless of age or body type. Wear what you want, and let people think what they think.



A Satin Party Gown

Whether you're Josephine Baker or a modern-day, 21st-century woman, an eye-popping satin dress is always in fashion, especially this time of year. So pop some bubbly, turn up the Edith Piaf, and enjoy the glamor and delight that comes from living the French fashion ideal.



WINTER

What's in my bag!



Scarf

Camera

Lip Balm

Phone

Ear Muffs

Headphones

Umbrella

Emergency
Croissant

Navigo

Journal



© David Henry / Pexels

11 MUST-SEE COVERED PASSAGES

BY JILL AMARI



Since 1798, covered passages have become a staple of Paris's architecture. Most were built in the early 1800s, so by the time the Second Empire (1852-1870) was in place, the city boasted about 150 passages and galleries. Originally built as industrial hubs, covered passages quickly became trendy places to walk around, meet up with other locals, and shop. Well-lit and architecturally appealing, these passages provided shelter from bad weather and numerous shopping and entertainment options.

Unfortunately, many passages were demolished or closed down during the Second Empire, when Baron Haussmann nearly rebuilt

Paris from scratch and *grands magasins* popped up near Opéra and other spots. Since then, other passages have been privatized, while new passages, though few and far between, appeared in the 1900s and early 2000s.

Today, about 25 covered passages remain open to the public. The most well-known of these passages hold boutiques, art or jewelry studios, restaurants, bookshops, hair salons, and even hotels and apartments. Eleven covered passages truly stand out, whether for historical, cultural, or aesthetic reasons.



1. Galerie Véro-Dodat (1st arrt.)

Built in 1826, Galerie Véro-Dodat is known for its high-end boutiques and beauty parlors. Along this short passageway, you can find a Louboutin store, specialized boutiques, and an organic hair salon which recycles all the hair they cut. This gallery is a calm and quiet place to escape the bustle of the surrounding neighborhood, which is often filled with tourists as it's near the Louvre, Palais Royal, Bourse du Commerce, and Les Halles. Surprisingly, Véro-Dodat remains one of Paris's best-hidden galleries, despite its central location.



2. Galerie Colbert and Passage des Deux Pavillons (1st and 2nd arrt.)

Galerie Colbert was built in 1827 to rival its neighbor, Galerie Vivienne. While it holds no restaurants or boutiques, its unique architectural style and notable rotunda make it a must-see. One wing of Galerie Colbert is the Passage des Deux Pavillons, and when you reach the center where the two wings connect, you can find conference rooms and other spots to relax or get some work done. Originally, Galerie Colbert held boutiques, publishers, and reading rooms, not so different from other covered passages of the era. However, it fell into disrepair and the rotunda was destroyed in the 1910s, and the gallery was largely left abandoned until it was reconstructed in the 1980s to be as close to the original as possible. Today, it's owned by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF) and is home to the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art and other institutions related to art and cultural heritage.

3. Galerie Vivienne (2nd arrt.)

Perhaps one of the most famous covered passages, Galerie Vivienne has been drawing crowds since its opening in 1824. Following the traditional layout of other passages, Vivienne boasts art galleries, various boutiques, bookshops, restaurants, and jewelry studios. It's a great place to look for gifts or to get your holiday shopping done. In addition, Galerie Vivienne is located across from the BnF Richelieu, known for its garden, museum, and Oval Room. The Palais Royal and its gardens and galleries are also near Vivienne, and the Louvre is only a 10-minute walk away.



© Berh LIEU SONG / Wikimedia Commons

4. Passage Choiseul (2nd arrt.)

As one of the 20 covered passages erected between 1821 and 1830, Passage Choiseul has had a rich history and is classified as a historical monument. Originally a place for theatre and literature, Passage Choiseul is now known for its Asian influence, with a large number of Asian restaurants and other types of gastronomy. In addition, Café Joyeux, whose employees are all people with learning difficulties, sits at one end of the passage, perfect for a quick snack or warm drink. Passage Choiseul is a great spot not only for grabbing a bite to eat, but also for unique shopping options, such as upcycled decorations, art and art supplies, jewelry, and more.



© Jean-François Gornet / Wikimedia Commons

5. Passage du Caire (2nd arrt.)

Opened in 1798, Passage du Caire is Paris's first—and longest—covered passage, which ushered in a new era of industrial expansion. The passage was inspired by Napoleon's expedition in Egypt, and the Egyptian influence expanded into the rest of the Sentier neighborhood in the 2nd arrondissement. Today, Passage du Caire remains true to its roots as an artisanal and industrial hub, differentiating it from other covered passages which focus more on shopping or gastronomy.



© GFreihalter / Wikimedia Commons



6. Passage du Grand Cerf and Bourg l'Abbé (2nd arrt.)

The 2nd arrondissement has passages nearly everywhere you look, and the Saint-Denis neighborhood is no different. Along this famous street, you can find two passages facing each other: Passage du Grand Cerf (circa 1825) and its offshoot Passage du Bourg l'Abbé (1828). Grand Cerf is known for having the highest glass ceiling at 11.80 meters, or three floors, high. It was constructed to be spacious enough for shops, warehouses, and residences, as Paris saw an uptick in industrial production around this time of the Restoration. Both Grand Cerf and Bourg l'Abbé have remained as authentic to their 1820s versions as possible, with some shop signs even being the originals. Several of the businesses remain specialized as they once were in the 19th century, such as furniture repair shops, homemade soap stores, jewelry stores, and embroidery boutiques. Modern designers and antique lovers alike call these two passages home, thanks to major restorations that took place starting in 1990, after the passages were closed due to safety reasons.

7. Passage Molière (3rd arrt.)

Perhaps inspired by the renowned literary figure and playwright from whom the passage takes its name, Passage Molière is home to the Maison de la Poésie, which promotes literary events and supports the literary arts. This passage, which is partially covered, is one of only two in the 3rd arrondissement, tucked away along a tranquil street. In keeping with its literary theme, the passage houses several papeteries, or paper stores, where you can find everything from uniquely designed postcards to art supplies.



© Mbzt / Wikimedia Commons



8. Cour du Commerce Saint-André (6th arrt.)

Neither a “passage” nor a “galerie,” Cour du Commerce Saint-André is a chic, partially covered lane in the 6th arrondissement. The Right Bank claims nearly all the covered passages in Paris, so finding one in the 6th is a true treasure. In fact, the glass roof was added much later in 1823, when covered passages became a trend. Along the *cour*, you can find jewelry shops and art stores mixed in with the traditional French restaurants, pubs, and *salons de thé*. The literary influence of the surrounding Odéon neighborhood is clear, especially thanks to the café Procope, founded in 1686. Procope was a place frequented by important literary, artistic, philosophical, and political figures, and it remains a significant spot for poets and writers today. As an old medieval lane, Cour du Commerce Saint-André offers a glimpse of Paris as it used to be, before the Second Empire.

9. Galerie de la Madeleine (8th arrt.)

Considering its distance from the center of Paris, where covered passages dominate, Galerie de la Madeleine isn't widely known. Largely overshadowed by the impressive Église de la Madeleine nearby, this quiet passageway is rarely visited by tourists. Along the gallery, you can find luxury shopping options and a sophisticated architectural design, but considering how short this passage is, there are certainly more shopping and restaurant options in the surrounding area rather than in the passage itself. Galerie de la Madeleine was opened in 1846, later than most other covered passages.



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10. Passage Jouffroy (9th arrt.)

Also opened in 1846, Passage Jouffroy is one of the most-visited passages in Paris today. This passage was originally built to continue the Passage des Panoramas (2nd arrt.) across the street, and its other neighbor Passage Verdeau (9th arrt.) sits at the opposite end of Jouffroy. Jouffroy is notable for being the first passage built entirely out of iron and glass. With its wide variety of high-quality, handmade shopping choices and organic café options, Jouffroy is frequented by tourists and locals alike. However, it's largely thanks to the Musée Grévin that Jouffroy has remained popular and well-maintained throughout the decades: when the wax museum opened in 1882, it became the neighborhood's biggest attraction. Other notable shops dot the passage: Librairie du Passage, which is one of the oldest bookstores in Paris; Hotel Chopin, which was opened the same year as the passage itself; and the popular chain thrift store Kilo Shop.

11. Passage Brady (10th arrt.)



Passage Brady is located on the cusp of the 2nd and 10th arrondissements and was built in 1828. Heavily influenced by Indian culture, Brady has almost exclusively Indian stores dotting its wings. From Indian foods and spices to clothes and accessories, you can find nearly everything you need in Passage Brady. What also makes this passage interesting is that half the passage is covered, and the other half, located across Boulevard de Strasbourg, is not.



NO REPORTAGE | WINTER IN PARIS

© Celine Ylmz



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UNDER THE OPERA AT PALAIS GARNIER

The Phantom Lake

BY LOUI FRANKE

Of the many symbols of Paris, the Palais Garnier is certainly one of those most closely associated with the city. The opera house was finished in 1875- it celebrated its 150th birthday in 2025! It may very well be the most famous opera house in existence. This claim is made in part because of its unquestionable beauty but also because of the fame generated from *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* by Gaston Leroux in 1910. This story was published as a serial in *Le Gaulois* over a three and a half month period and shortly thereafter as a novel.

In brief, the story is a love triangle between the beautiful Christine with her childhood friend, Raoul, and the phantom, Erik. Erik is a deformed architect who helped build the Paris Opera House while simultaneously and secretly building an underground palace for himself where a vast subterranean lake flowed.



If you thought that the water in the basement was a myth fabricated by Gaston Leroux, it is not. Let's go back to 1862 when the first concrete foundations were being poured. The opera house needed a significantly deeper basement than other buildings but they were digging into a marshy area where the groundwater was particularly high.

After unsuccessfully attempting to drain the site with wells and steam pumps, Charles Garnier, the real architect, came up with a solution. He designed a double foundation to protect the superstructure from moisture that included an enormous cistern which relieves the pressure from the external groundwater and also allows for a reservoir of water in the event of a fire.



Speaking of fire, the fire fighters in Paris do their underwater training in this cistern.

I had the opportunity to explore the alcoves and passageways below the Palais Garnier and to get a glimpse of this subterranean lake. I was told that the area has lost much of its eeriness due to ongoing upgrades but my imagination had no problem to envision a netherworld that was the inspiration for Leroux's famous story.



If you are wondering about the impact of the flooding in Paris on the opera house and on its underground lake, there has been no impact. None at all. The level of the water in the cistern has remained constant. However, during the great flood of 1910, this was not the case. The cistern was completely filled and the tunnels were filled with water to over five feet. There is a water mark noted with an “H” (for *la hauteur*) in a difficult to reach area. But, I did manage to squeeze into this spot and take a photo. The “H” was well above my head and I am 5 feet 6 inches.



I am sorry to tell you that the lake is not part of the standard tours offered at the Palais Garnier. However, the building is absolutely magnificent and I strongly encourage everyone to visit it. They have themed guided tours in English every day.

If you have the time, why not get tickets for a magical experience of being at the Palais Garnier?



© Veronika Pfeiffer

PARISIAN MUSICALS TO SEE IN WINTER

The Phantom of the Opera

Set inside the Palais Garnier opera house in Paris, it centres on a mysterious “phantom” who becomes obsessed with young singer Christine.



TICKET NUMBER: 0 35545 62336 78 1

ADMIT ONE

NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS

SET AROUND THE CATHEDRAL OF NOTRE-DAME IN MEDIEVAL PARIS, IT DRAMATIZES THE LOVE AND OBSESSION SURROUNDING THE GYPSY DANCER ESMERALDA.

594620



Moulin Rouge

Set in the Montmartre nightlife world around the real Moulin Rouge cabaret, it tells a feverish love story against a backdrop of Belle Époque spectacle.



TICKET NUMBER: 23984738

LES MISÉRABLES

ROOTED IN THE STREETS, SLUMS AND BARRICADES OF 19TH CENTURY PARIS, IT FOLLOWS EX-CONVICT JEAN VALJEAN AND A CAST OF REVOLUTIONARIES AND OUTCASTS.

ADMIT ONE



© Christina Terzidou / Unsplash

Books about Paris

FOR A WINTRY HIBERNATION

BY JANET HULSTRAND

Winter has a way of nudging us indoors, wrapping us in woolly jumpers, hot drinks and long, quiet evenings. Whether you are in Paris watching the light fade over the rooftops, or dreaming of the city from somewhere much further away, it is the perfect season to sink into some big, indulgent books.

Here is my short list of recommended hefty but fascinating reads. You can find these titles at your favourite local independent bookshop, such as the Red Wheelbarrow in Paris.

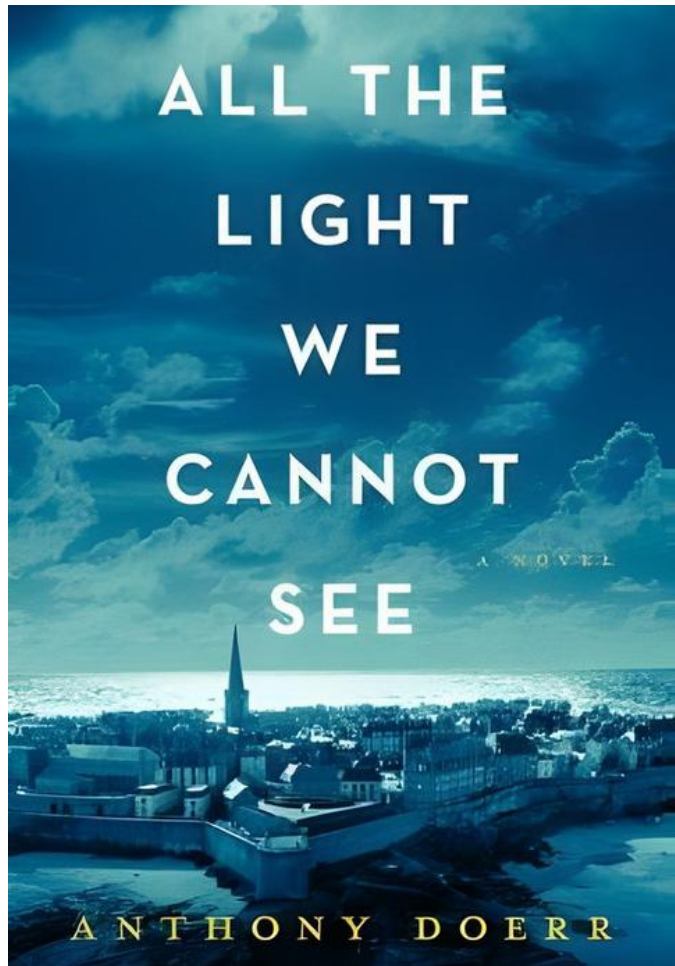


© Celine Ylmz / Unsplash

Fiction

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr

The Pulitzer Prize committee called this book “an imaginative and intricate novel inspired by the horrors of World War II and written in short, elegant chapters that explore human nature and the contradictory power of technology.” I agree, but I would add it is about so much more. It is about human strength and weakness; the beauty of music and the earth; the power of storytelling; and the ability of love to if not



conquer all, at least provide some solace in a world too often gone mad. “Transformative” is a word often used to describe the experience of reading this book. The prose is surpassingly beautiful, and the insights into human life are profound. This is a book that bears rereading, so if you’ve already read it, you might want to read it again.

The Parisian by Isabella Hammad

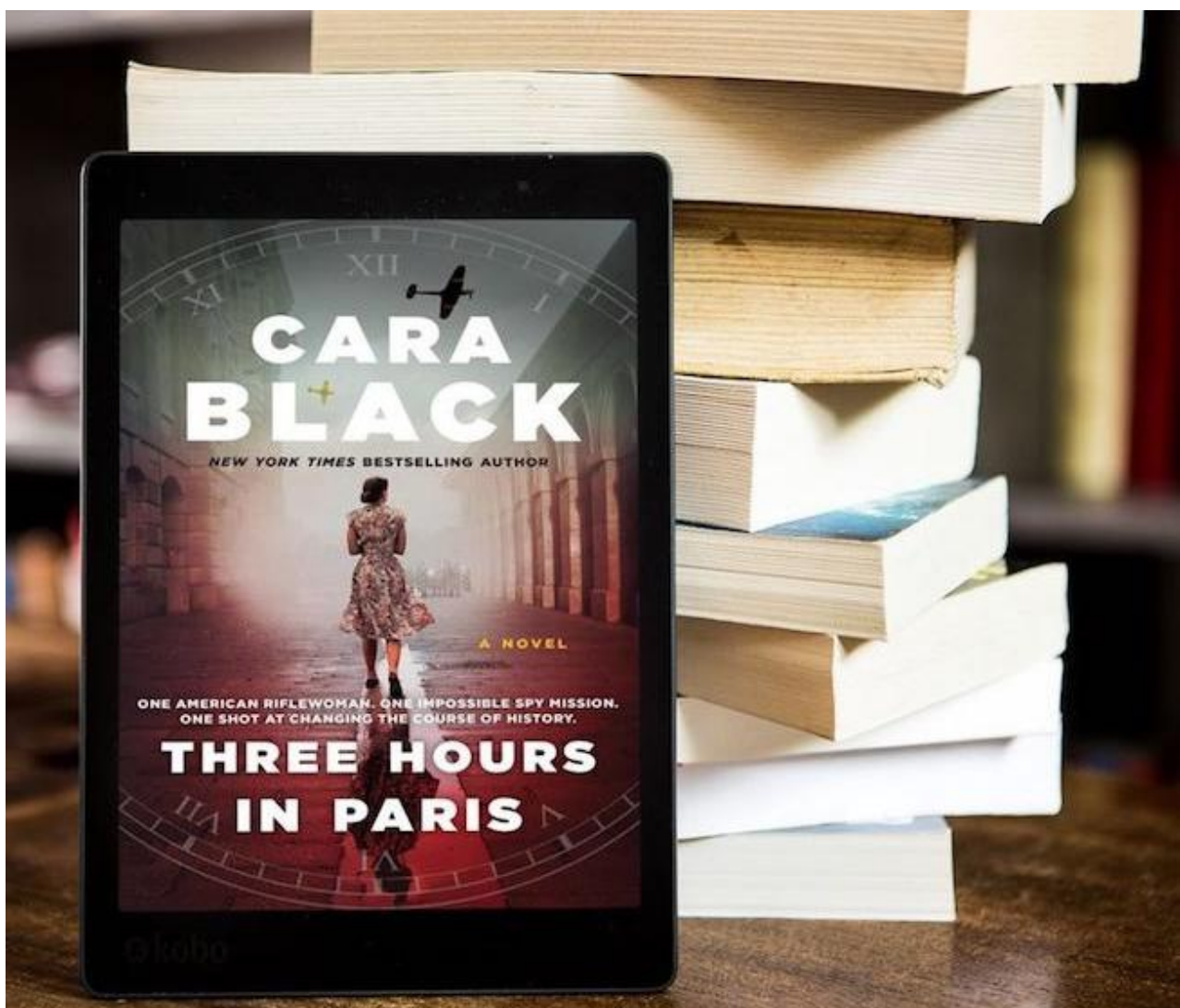
This novel is the story of a young man, a Palestinian, who is sent by his father to study medicine in France at the beginning of the First World War. He spends a few years in France, years that are for him liberating and transformative; then he returns to Palestine. But the impact of his time in France never leaves him. This is one of only two books I've ever read that made me want to begin reading again immediately as soon as I



reached the end of the book: it's that good, that rich, that worth rereading. I also learned a lot about the 20th century history of Palestine and Syria that I wanted to know through reading this book. (Many of us really need to know more about this history.)

Three Hours in Paris by Cara Black

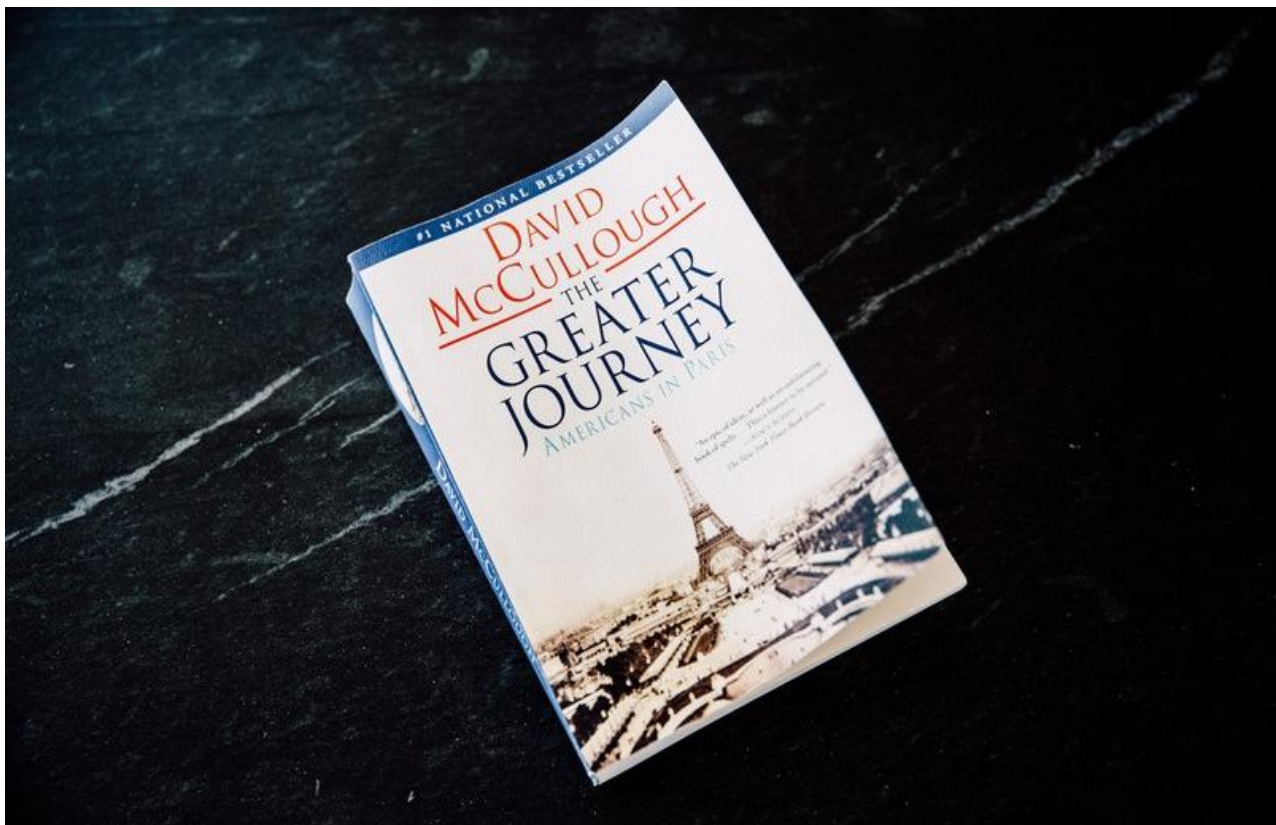
This is a great choice for someone who is the mood for a thriller set in World War II; or a novel featuring a strong, independent, and very capable woman: or both. The story is built upon the historical fact that Adolf Hitler came to Paris only once, and when he did, he only stayed for three hours. Black was so intrigued by this odd fact that she built her story of an American sharpshooting woman who is sent by British intelligence to attempt to assassinate him. The writing is sharp, the plot spellbinding, and the characters are rich and full.



Nonfiction

The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris by David McCullough

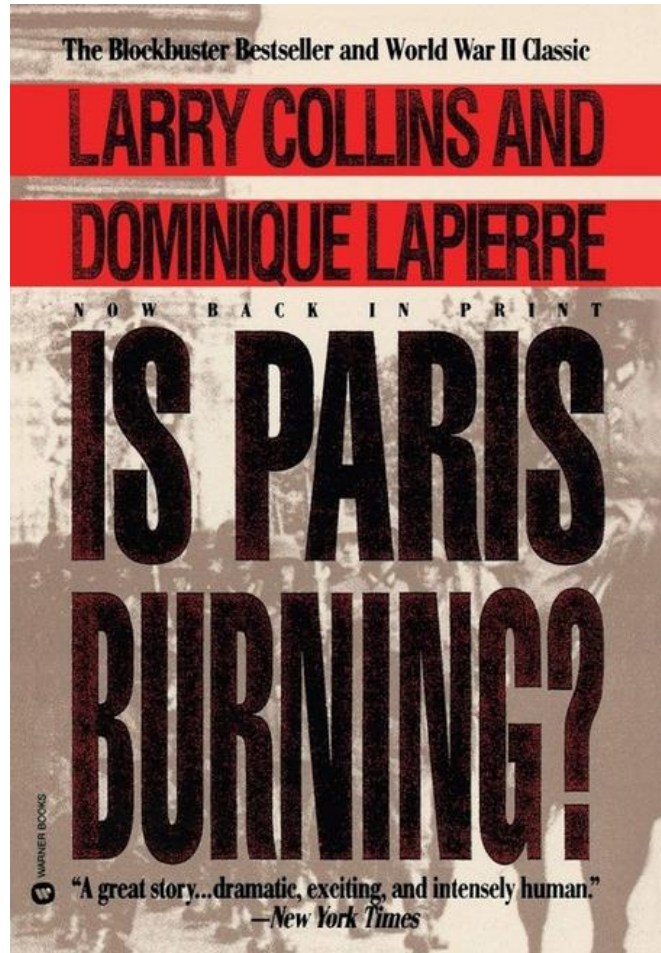
This is one of the books that was on my shelf for years before I finally read it, partly because it is so long, and partly because even knowing what a good writer McCullough is I thought it might be a bit cumbersome to get through. I should not have waited! This is history at its best: McCullough is a gifted storyteller. He brings to life a number of not-so-well-known, but important, American figures, and demonstrates just how crucial Paris was in influencing the cultural and intellectual development of the United States in the 19th century. This is a must-read for all Americans, especially those who love France.



Is Paris Burning?

by **Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre**

The first time I read this book I told everyone who would listen to me that it was the most exciting book I had ever read, even though I knew before I opened it “how things were going to turn out.” The true back story of the liberation of Paris, and how Paris was saved from destruction involved a complicated network of efforts (and decisions) by Resistance fighters, Allied forces, the Swedish

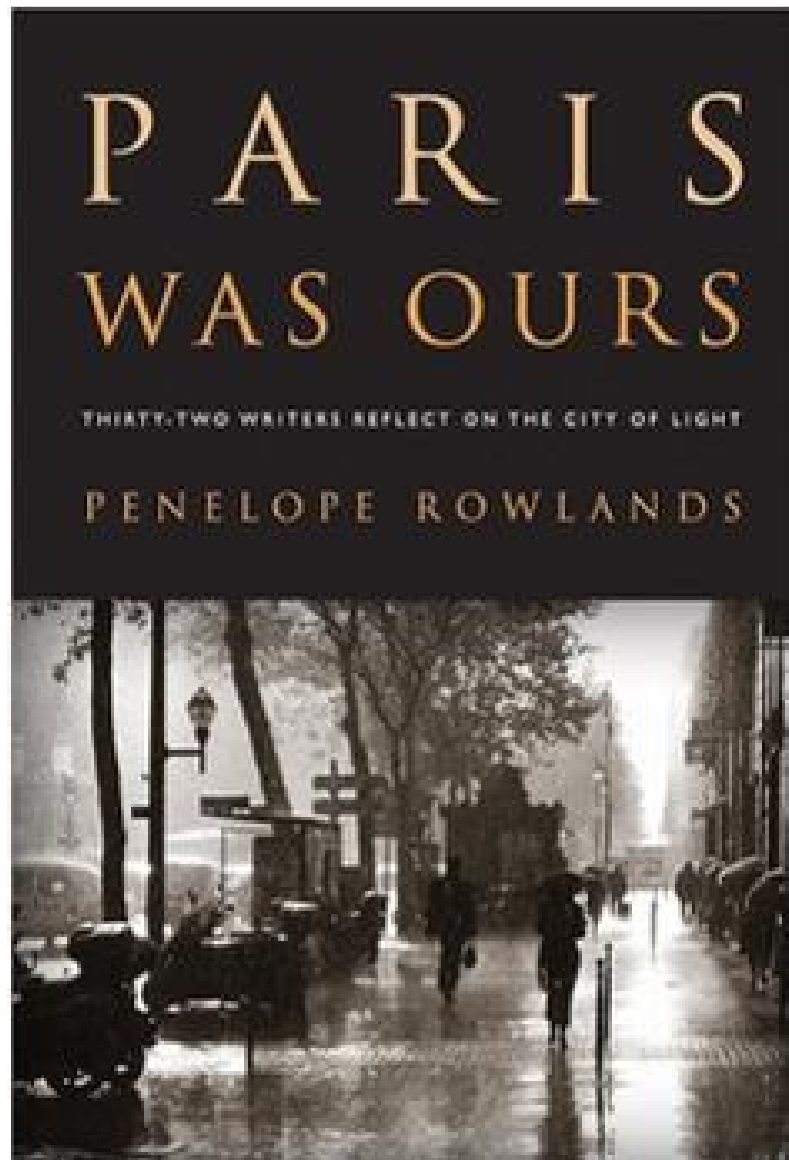


ambassador to France, and even a German general. I never knew how close Paris had come to being reduced to rubble until I read this book. And I have never taken for granted its enduring beauty since reading it. Absolutely gripping!

The following two books are not so long, but as collections of (wonderful) essays, they deserve to be read slowly, with time for contemplation and reflection built into the space between each of the essays. Thus, they too are wonderful at-home winter reading.

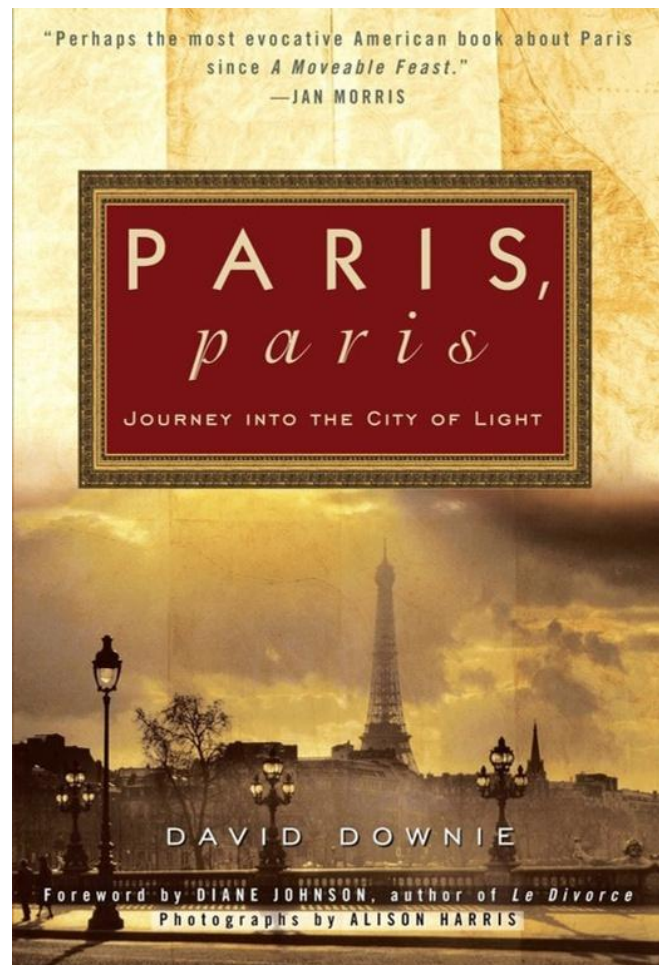
Paris Was Ours: Thirty-Two Writers Reflect on the City of Light by Penelope Rowlands

These 32 essays were specially curated by Rowlands for this collection; they center on the question she asked herself when conceiving it (“Why, of all the places I’ve lived, did Paris affect me the most?”) It includes writers from Cuba, Iran, Iraq, England, Canada, the U.S., even France. Wonderful writing, and it offers a fascinating and diverse set of perspectives on this most fascinating city.



Paris, Paris: Journey into the City of Light by David Downie

This is the book I always recommend when someone asks me if they can only take one book with them to Paris, what should it be? This collection of 31 short prose sketches written by Downie has something to please, interest, and/or enlighten almost anyone on some aspect of the “people, places, and daily life” in Paris, whatever their interests may be. And his ever-present wit and good nature make you feel like you’re striding right along by his side as he opens up a wealth of information and odd facts about a variety of fascinating places in Paris. Strongly recommended!



Winter Vocabulary



un chocolat chaud



un bonhomme de neige



un flocon de neige



un parapluie



une soupe



un feu d'artifice



un pull



un sapin de Noël



© Passion Leica / Wikimedia Commons

ICE SKATING IN PARIS

BY ELINOR SHERIDAN



© Johan Mengels Culverhouse

On a clear winter evening in Paris the ice reflects the soft glow of streetlamps and shop windows. Blades whisper across the surface and someone lets out a short laugh after a wobble and a save. From frozen ponds to Belle Époque arenas and rooftop pop-ups, Paris now has steady year-round ice for training and seasonal rinks for ambiance.

Before the marvels of refrigeration, Parisians would wait for cold snaps when basins froze in the parks and ponds became informal arenas. The earliest scenes were simple with coats buttoned tight, cheeks bright, and careful figures traced on imperfect ice. At Versailles, Marie Antoinette skated on the palace lakes during hard winters, and decades later Napoleon III and Empress Eugénie did the same.

By the 1870s artificial ice and enclosed rinks reached Paris and suddenly skating could be scheduled, which changed everything. You could book an evening, bring friends, listen to music, and know that the ice would be there. A circular hall near the Champs Élysées became a society destination where people came to glide, watch, and be seen. Technique improved as people could practice on schedule, and clubs formed with coaches, leading the sport to take root.



During the deep freeze of 1929 the lakes in the Bois de Boulogne turned to clear, weighty ice and drew half the city westward. By late afternoon the Lower Lake was a crisscross of blade marks. Vendors rolled out braziers and paper cups of hot wine, gendarmes paced the edges and roped off thin patches, and music carried from portable gramophones. Newsreels from that winter show Paris answering ice with good humor and long scarves.

Did people ever skate on the Seine?

Paintings from the early 1600s show skaters near the Louvre, and later cold snaps turned the river into winter ground for a few memorable weeks, most famously in 1891 and again during the brutal winters of 1947 and 1956. People glided where barges usually moved, weaving around market stalls set up on the ice. That era has passed as warmer winters and tighter river management mean the Seine through central Paris almost never freezes now, and any ice is treated as unsafe.



Where to skate year-round in the city

Pailleron Ice Rink, 19th arrondissement: Reliable, central enough, and friendly to beginners. Public sessions run across the week with rental skates on site.

Accor Arena complex, Bercy: The sheet is large, the acoustics give music some presence, and you are a short walk from the line of cafés along the Seine.

The best Paris ice skating rinks for winter

Wherever you go, check session times before you lace up, bring gloves, and give yourself a few laps to settle in.

Grand Palais des Glaces, 8th arrondissement

The Nave becomes a 2,700 m² sheet billed as the world's largest indoor rink. Daylight shows off the ironwork by day and evenings feel theatrical with music and lighting. Plenty of space for steady laps in an iconic setting, late into the night.



© Passion Leica / Wikimedia Commons

Galleries Lafayette Rooftop, 9th arrondissement

A compact open-air rink above Boulevard Haussmann with incredible Eiffel Tower views. Friendly for first timers with easy skate hire, and an easy walk to cafés below.



© Galleries Lafayette

Printemps Haussmann Rooftop, 9th arrondissement

The *7e Ciel* roof terrace hosts a smaller seasonal rink with a sleek, city feel. Best for relaxed circuits at sunset, quick photos over the rooftops, and a warm-up stop inside afterward.

Parc Astérix, Oise

Part of the Noël Gaulois season with shows and a Christmas market. The outdoor rink is a welcome pause between rides and makes a good late-afternoon stop.

Enghien-les-Bains, Val-d'Oise

Lakeside illuminations, a small rink, and a compact market. Go for an easy half-day, skate as dusk falls, then stroll the esplanade with something warm in hand.





© Tuileries Christmas

Tuileries Christmas Market Rink, 1st arrondissement

A busy, festive rink inside the market with twinkling lights, rides, and food stalls close at hand. There's also a reserved space for little ones to skate safely.

Plaza Athénée Courtyard, 8th arrondissement

Intimate and exclusive courtyard rink with a cozy chalet for *raclette* and hot drinks.



© Plaza Athénée



© Shutterstock

HOW TO CELEBRATE THE NEW YEAR IN PARIS

BY JOSIE SHARP



© frankreporter

There's no better place to celebrate the end of a great year and the beginning of a new one than in Paris. Romantic, vibrant, and magical, this city comes alive for New Year's, from the sparkling Eiffel Tower to festive Champs-Élysées fireworks displays and romantic cruises along the Seine. With its mix of elegance and excitement, Paris makes ringing in the New Year truly unforgettable.

French New Year Traditions

It is traditional to celebrate New Year's Eve with an extravagant multi-course feast known as *Le Réveillon*, to give tips or small gifts (*étrennes*) to service workers in appreciation of their efforts over the year, and to share a kiss under the mistletoe at midnight. Sending New Year's cards (*cartes de vœux*) is also more common than sending Christmas cards. Every family or group of friends has their own style of *réveillon*, but the celebration is often more indulgent than a typical dinner party, featuring dishes such as *foie gras*, oysters and, of course, champagne.





Champs-Élysées' Firework Display

The Champs-Élysées turns into one of Paris's busiest spots on New Year's Eve, drawing crowds for its dazzling fireworks and light displays. On this world-famous boulevard, the celebration comes alive as the Arc de Triomphe becomes the centerpiece of spectacular sound-and-light shows in the evening leading up to the countdown. Thousands of locals and visitors fill the avenue to celebrate the last moments of the year together, creating an atmosphere full of excitement for the year to come. The entire area transforms into a festive open-air celebration, making it one of the most unforgettable places to welcome the new year in Paris.



New Year's Cruises along the Seine

If big crowds aren't your style but you still want to catch the fireworks, several river cruises offer special New Year's Eve packages. These often include dinner, entertainment, and plenty of champagne to toast to the new year, while taking in sparkling views of Paris' most iconic landmarks from the water. Many cruises even feature live DJs, dance floors or themed parties, creating a festive atmosphere without the hustle of the city streets.

La Grande Soirée du 31

For those who have their own traditions of ringing in the new year at home, La Grande Soirée du 31 annual TV special hosted by Stéphane Bern, offers festive entertainment with live performances –featuring dancers from iconic Parisian cabarets such as the Moulin Rouge and Paradis Latin. The broadcast is often staged in historically significant locations such as the Champs-Élysées, Versailles, or Chantilly, and ends with the impressive Champs-Élysées fireworks display, all enjoyed from the comfort of your home.

New Year's Day

Like much of the world, New Year's Day in France is a *jour férié*, but for those who don't need a lie-in after a busy night of celebrating, some museums and attractions are open on the first day of the year. Even though the Louvre isn't open, you can still visit the Musée d'Orsay from 10 a.m., as well as other famous art attractions like the Musée de l'Orangerie, the Musée de Montmartre, and the Château de Versailles. Landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower, the Sacré-Cœur Basilica, and Notre-Dame are open daily, but we recommend you make a free online reservation for Notre-Dame to avoid long lines and wait times.

Getting around on New Year's Eve

Public transportation in Paris will be free from 5pm on New Year's Eve until 5am on January 1, 2026. Passengers can hop on any train on Métro lines 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, and 14, as well as all RER lines, without buying a ticket. Buses and trams will also run on New Year's Eve, though with limited service.





© Freepik

WINTER SKIN SOS À LA FRANÇAISE

BY ELIZABETH CUMMINGS



© Africa Images

Who doesn't suffer from dry skin in winter? Whether it's your first visit to France or your fiftieth, a stop at the local *pharmacie* is always worth it to discover the latest in French skincare. From head to toe, here are a few *très français* essentials to keep your skin supple and happy all winter long.

Face

Product: Nutritic Intense Riche

Brand: La Roche-Posay



This emollient face cream is ultra-hydrating, thick, and unscented – perfect for winter but gentle enough for year-round use. With zero greasy residue, it banishes that uncomfortable “tight skin” feeling. I’ve gifted it to friends and never heard a single complaint.

Tip - Between cleansing and moisturizing, spritz on a toner to “bridge the gap” between damp and dry skin. I use the Clarins Lotion Tonique Hydratante, but the thermal water sprays – from Vichy, Avène, or Evian – are also wonderful and refreshingly simple.

Lips

Product: Bariéderm-Cica Baume Lèvres Protecteur

Brand: Uriage

Keep one of these in your pocket at all times. This thick, *gelée*-like balm glides on smoothly, stays put, and hydrates without feeling overly glossy. With three types of wax and glycerin, it's more “treatment” than gloss.



© AndreyCherkasov

Barrier Creams

Barrier creams are becoming more common outside France, but they remain the cult favorite among *pharmacie* devotees. Perfect for when your skin is compromised – think windburn from skiing in the Alps – or as an overnight treatment for hands and face to fortify the skin while you sleep.

Product: BIAFINE® Emulsion**Brand: Biafine**

Biafine is the original burn *crème* with its active ingredient trolamine. It is considered a medicinal product and is approved for use on first and second degree burns (think radiology, tattoos and laser treatments, as well as smaller sunburned areas). It comes in a metal tube which makes it easy to squeeze out and slather on glops of the stuff!

**Product: Cicalfate Crème Réparatrice Protectrice****Brand: Avène**

Avène’s Cicalfate is most similar to a traditional cold *crème*, with a rich and slightly oily texture, though dries to a matte finish. Enriched with copper and zinc sulfates, it delivers a “bandage effect” that soothes and protects damaged skin.

Tip: The Cicalfate line also includes a gentle, hydrating cleansing bar – perfect when your skin is feeling especially sensitive.

Product: Cicaplast Baume B5+ Crème Ultra-Réparatrice Apaisante
Brand: La Roche-Posay

Practically every French skincare brand has one of these barrier *crèmes*, and for a slightly lighter option that is closer to a thick lotion than a cold creme, try La Roche-Posay’s Cicaplast Baume B5.



Body

Product: Baume Corps Protecteur
Brand: Saint-Gervais Mont Blanc

Rich and velvety without being heavy, this balm has the perfect “in-between” texture – more substantial than a lotion, less dense than a cream. Its light blue tint evokes glacial water, and any fragrance is largely imperceptible. It leaves a soft, smooth finish and works beautifully on both body and hands (and yes, it’s gentle enough for the face in a pinch).



SOS — Beyond the Crèmes

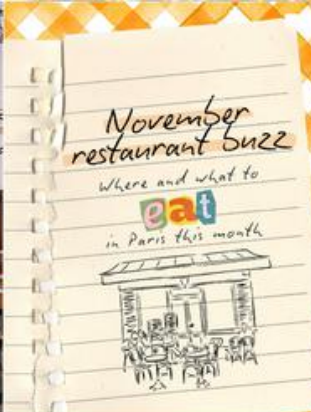
Good health in winter isn't just about what you slather on. Try adding these *pharmacie* staples to your toolkit:

- Voyage to the seaside every morning with an *Eau de mer* nasal spray to keep sinuses clear and fend off colds.
- They might be made by a British-Dutch company, but don't Strepsils throat pastilles sound better in French flavors like *miel-citron* and *menthe glaciale*?
- Vicks Toux Natura - Sirop Toux Sèche et Grasse - Goût Miel with marshmallow, plantain, and grindelia roots – a natural remedy that's surprisingly pleasant (the secret might be that it's 95% cane sugar).



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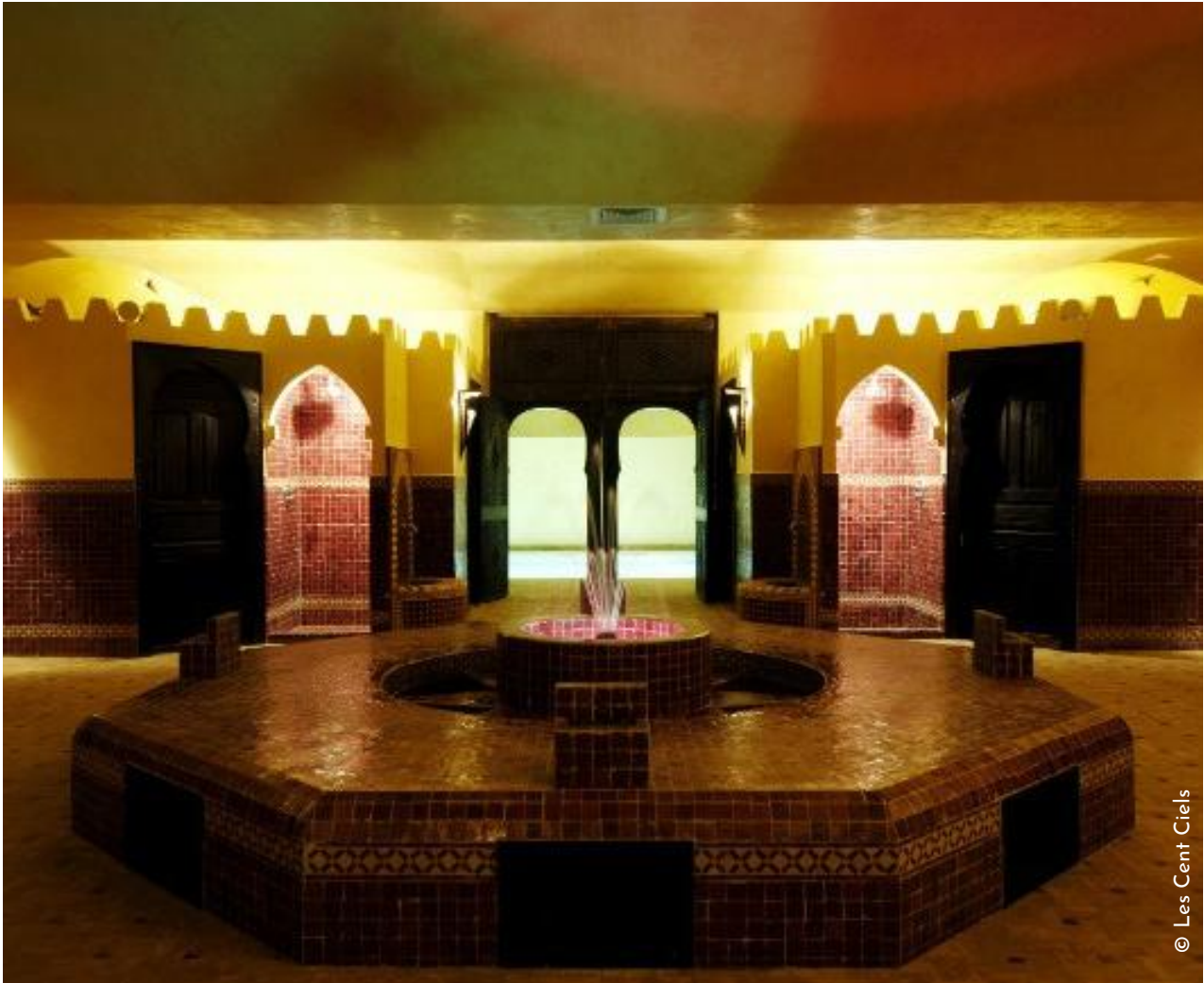


© Hammam Mosquée de Paris

History of Paris Hammams

AND WHERE TO FIND THE BEST

BY POPPY PEARCE



© Les Cent Cielis

In the heart of Paris, hidden behind ornate doorways and tiled archways, lies a world of warmth and rejuvenation. Often nicknamed the “silent doctor,” the hammam has long been cherished for its power to heal without medicine. A sanctuary where steam and scent work together to restore balance and vitality. In North Africa, hammams have been a centuries-old tradition, valued not only for cleansing the body but also as a social and spiritual ritual. When Paris turns gray and cold, stepping into a hammam feels like being transported somewhere sunlit and serene, easing everything from fatigue to winter chills.

And if you're fighting off a sniffle, this ancient ritual might just be the most luxurious way to cleanse and recover. Today, the hammam endures in Paris as both a wellness retreat and a living bridge to the city's North African heritage.

The hammam's story in Paris begins in the early 20th century, when communities from North Africa, particularly from Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, brought with them their traditions of wellness and community. These steam baths, modeled after the Ottoman and Roman bathhouses, were first built to serve North African communities in Paris who longed for the familiar comforts of home.



© Shutterstock

What began as a functional place for bathing and ritual purification soon became something much deeper: a space of connection, solidarity, and continuity for those living far from their native lands. By mid-century, these hammams attracted curious Parisians and tourists eager to experience their tranquil rituals. Today, hammams dot the city, each a small universe of warmth and steam linking modern France to its North African past.

The most emblematic hammam in the city lies within the Grande Mosquée de Paris, in the 5th arrondissement. Completed in 1926, the mosque was built as a memorial of the tens of thousands of Muslim soldiers from French colonies who died fighting for France during World War I. Covering 7,500 square meters, the complex includes a madrasa, library, conference hall, Moorish gardens, and, tucked away behind elegant courtyards, a traditional hammam and tearoom.



© Marc Cooper/ Wikimedia Commons

The hammam here remains one of the most atmospheric in Paris. Under domed ceilings and beneath blue-and-white tiles, clouds of steam carry the scent of black soap and rose water. After the purifying rituals, visitors are invited to linger with a glass of sweet mint tea in the sunlit courtyard. This space embodies calm within just steps of the Jardin des Plantes.

In the lively neighborhood of Barbès-Rochechouart, Hammam Bains Vapeurs offers a more down-to-earth experience reminiscent of the true Maghreb. Adorned with marble and softly lit rooms, it's one of the few hammams in Paris that welcomes both men and women, with separate spaces for each. Locals have been returning here for decades, drawn by its modest prices, generous hospitality, and the sense of community. After a long steam and a vigorous black soap scrub, guests can recline in the spacious relaxation lounge – perhaps sharing mint tea or quiet conversation as the city hums outside.



© Hammam Bains Vapeurs Paris

Across the Seine, in the elegant 6th arrondissement, Hammam Pacha has been a holistic haven for women since its founding in 1988 by Tunisian entrepreneur Georges Nataf who created it in homage to his mother and his own childhood memories of hammam visits in Tunisia. Visitors can also enjoy a leisurely meal in the adjoining restaurant serving organic food, where fragrant tagines and pastries complete the experience. A delicious journey to Morocco without leaving Saint-Germain-des-Prés!



© Hammam Pacha



Run by four Moroccan women – Wafae, Sovad, Fatiha, and Zineb – in the 2nd arrondissement, Aux Bains Montorgueil radiates warmth and care. For them, “happiness is a lifelong affair,” and each massage or scrub is given with heartfelt generosity. Raised with Morocco’s sacred tradition of the *gommeuse*, this women-only hammam offers a nurturing refuge from the city’s chaos, soothing body, spirit, and soul.

The hammam has long been woven into daily life across the Middle East and North Africa. A place where generations gather to rest, recharge, and reconnect. In Paris, these steam-filled sanctuaries carry that same spirit, highlighting the many cultural layers of the city. To step into a hammam is to feel warmth in every sense. The warmth of the water of course, but also of connection.

Mulled wine recipe (aka vin chaud)

Ingredients:

- A bottle of red wine - it doesn't need to be expensive
- 130 g of sugar
- Zest of one lemon
- Zest and juice of one orange
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 3 star anise
- 3 cloves
- Pinch of ground nutmeg



Instructions:

- Pour the bottle of red wine into a saucepan and add all the other ingredients.
- Bring to the boil and simmer for five minutes.
- Taste to see if it needs more sugar.
- Strain and serve warm.



© Csondy / Getty Images Signature

STRATEGICALLY SHOPPING THE WINTER SALES

BY KAREN FAWCETT

In France the word *soldes* is not just marketing, it is a legal term. The state sets two official sale periods a year and lays down strict rules for them. The winter sales generally begin in early January and the summer sales in late June, and in most of France each *soldes* period now lasts four weeks. Outside those dates shops are free to run other promotions and private sales whenever they like, but they cannot label those offers *soldes*.

What many people do not know is that for the official *soldes*, items legally must already have been in the shop's stock, and paid for, for at least a month before the sales begin. Shops are not allowed to restock those lines specially for the *soldes* or quietly top them up once the discounts start. That is why it pays to do a little reconnaissance in late December. You can prowl the rails, try things on, and decide what you are going to pounce on once the prices drop. If you are a loyal client or even especially nice, the salesperson might put the items aside for you, but don't tell...



© Melle Bé / Flickr

If you are craving a specific item, buy it as soon as you can when the sale begins or, most likely, it will not be there when you mosey into the store two weeks later, especially since shops are not supposed to restock those sale items once they are gone. You can be more casual if it is not a must-have piece and you are not playing Russian roulette.

Make a list of what you actually need and zero in on those pieces first. Do not get distracted by every red sticker you see or that perfect coat in your size may be gone by the time you circle back.

In winter, it can be worth planning your route by warmth as much as by neighborhood. Save a brighter, drier day for wandering the Marais, Saint-Germain or Canal Saint-Martin for smaller labels and boutiques.



Dress for battle. Outside it may be icy, inside the department stores it will be much warmer. Wear warm layers you can peel off easily, and a light top you can try things over without needing to strip in the changing room every five minutes. Shoes you can walk and stand in all day are non-negotiable.

Do not forget to file for the *détaxe* (tax refund) if you are a non-EU resident and leaving France. A standard 20 percent VAT (Value Added Tax) is levied on most fashion and luxury purchases, but you will not get the full 20 percent back. After the fees taken by refund operators, the net refund usually comes out somewhere between 10 and 15 percent of the ticket price. To qualify in France you must spend at least €100.01 including VAT, usually on the same day, and the retailer must participate in a tax-free scheme in the first place.

If you need to buy a little of this and a little of that, do your shopping at one of the big Paris department stores and chances are good you will reach the minimum by consolidating your purchases in one place. An app-based service such as ZappTax can be handy, as it lets you combine invoices from different shops and days so you only have to reach the minimum threshold once over your stay rather than in every store.



Keep an eye on the returns policy before you splurge. French shops are not obliged to take back sale items simply because you change your mind; unless there is a fault, some will offer exchanges only, or no returns at all during the *soldes*.

Think ahead. If you have children or grandchildren, buy for the future. Even if you are buying something that will be last year's model, who cares. If it is from a good store in Paris, chances are it will still be ahead of the style period where you live. Winter is the moment to snap up serious pieces that are expensive at full price: wool coats, proper boots, cashmere, the bag you have been stalking online.



© Mark Dymchenko / Getty Images

At the airport, keep the items you have purchased in a suitcase or bag that you can show to customs if asked. To get your *détaxe* validated you now usually scan the barcode on your forms at a kiosk or see a customs officer before you check your luggage and head for security. If customs decide to inspect your bargains and you cannot produce them, forget collecting the *détaxe*.

Once you have done the rounds, got your forms stamped and wedged that last pair of boots into your suitcase, take a breath and admire your haul. Shopping the winter *soldes* in Paris is not exactly a restful pastime, but if you do a little homework and keep your wits about you, you really can leave feeling that you have shopped like a local rather than just been swept along with the crowd.

A few final reminders before you hit the shops:

- Scout the rails a few days before the *soldes* start so you know exactly what you want.
- On the first day and on Saturdays, go early; for a calmer experience, try late opening evenings instead.
- Dress in comfortable clothing.
- Make a list, set a budget and head for your priority items first.
- Keep your passport, tax-free forms and receipts together in one safe place.
- Check the returns policy on sale items before you pay.
- Think about luggage: arrive with spare space or a fold-up bag you can check in on the way home.
- If you plan to hop between lots of small boutiques, look into an app-based tax-refund service so you can pool smaller purchases into a single claim.

Bonne chance, and may your size be the one that is left on the rail.

A photograph of a narrow, snow-covered street in Paris. The street is lined with multi-story buildings, some with balconies. In the background, the large white dome of the Sacré-Cœur Basilica is visible against a grey, overcast sky. The street is covered in a thick layer of snow, and several people are walking along it. A car is parked on the right side of the street. The overall atmosphere is quiet and wintry.

“Winter is not a season, it's a celebration.”

— Anamika Mishra



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7 OF THE BEST CHRISTMAS MARKETS IN PARIS

BY JOY ANDERSON



Although the tradition of Christmas, or Advent, Markets dates back to medieval times in places such as Germany and Alsace, in Paris, Christmas markets only started appearing in the mid-1990s, picking up more steam after the turn of the millennium. Today there are *Marchés de Noël* in almost every arrondissement of the city and each season it seems like at least one more is added to the list. So, in the spirit of Christmas, we say, “The more the merrier!”

Before proceeding, it's worth noting – stipulating even – that at virtually every Parisian market there will be mulled wine (*vin chaud*), mulled cider (*cidre chaud*), hot chocolate (*chocolat chaud*), roasted chestnuts (*marrons chauds*), lots of gooey and delicious melted cheese (*fondue, raclette*), *charcuterie*, *crêpes*, *gaufrettes* and a bounty of sweet seasonal confections.

It should come as no surprise that the best-known and most-frequented Parisian Christmas markets are located at or near the city's most prominent landmarks.



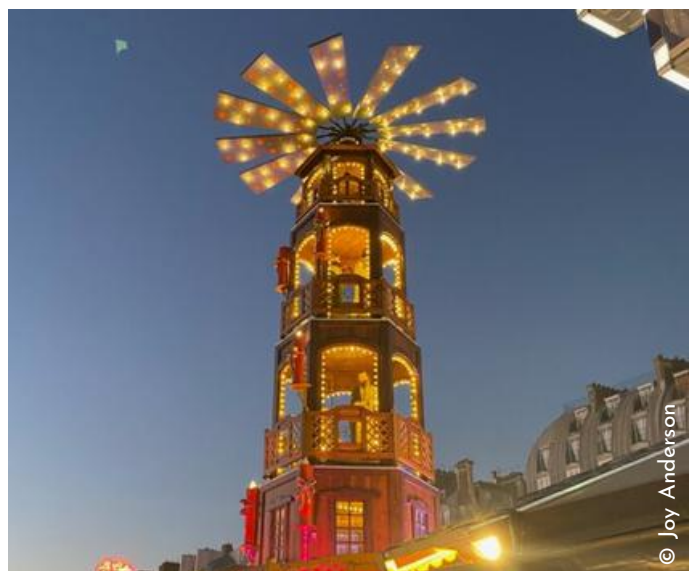
Le Jardin des Tuileries

Stretching from the northern end of the Louvre to Place de la Concorde, the Tuileries Gardens could not be a more magical location for *la Magie de Noël* or, the Magic of Christmas. The market itself is a delightful hodge podge of classic with a sprinkling of kitsch.

Throughout the summer, the Tuileries is home to an expansive family amusement park, and when it transforms in late November into a full-fledged Christmas market, many of its rides are still open. Dominating the scene is the Grande Roue, a nearly 200-foot-tall Ferris wheel that offers an awe-inspiring panoramic vista of the city of Paris. Other rides range from milder: a Christmas carousel for kids, Santa's little train, to wilder: a ginormous toboggan, bumper cars, a thrilling chair swing (and, of course there are more). Just below the Ferris wheel is a large skating rink (rental skates available).



There are roughly 80 wooden chalets, some for crafts and other wintry goods, and some for food and drink. The *Marché Gourmand* is noteworthy for serving oysters, *foie gras* and champagne. One chalet specializes in pretzels and frogs' legs. Others stand out for their imaginative decor—a few Alsatian storks perching on the roof of a spot offering *choucroute garnie*, or a ski-themed chalet stocked from roof to counter with enormous wheels of cheese. Most eye-catching might be the towering Christmas pyramid bar where people can gather for a warmup glass of *vin chaud* or other seasonal favorite.



Notre-Dame Christmas Market

Within the cozy surrounds of Square René Viviani, the *Marché de Noël Notre-Dame* offers a refreshing contrast to the concept of bigger-is-better found at many of the city's other markets. Romantically positioned directly across the Seine from the newly resurrected Notre-Dame Cathedral, the market feels Parisian rather than an import from points east. Instead of wooden chalets, white-tented stands form a partial circle around the central bronze fountain dedicated to St. Julien-le-Pauvre, creating a kind of village feel.

A distinguishing feature of this market is that everything sold is made in France and no two stalls sell the same merchandise. Artisans and vendors have been selected by L'Art et la Seine. There are Christmas carols and other seasonal music, storytelling, drawing and other family entertainment, and lots of chances to see and meet Santa Claus.

Historical-trivia buffs take note: Square René Viviani is also the site of the oldest tree in Paris, a black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), planted in 1601. It is believed, though not 100-percent confirmed, that the original seed pod was imported from the Appalachian Mountains in America.



The Eiffel Tower

Visitors to Paris will be pleased to hear about the *Village de Noël du Champ-de-Mars*, just steps from the Eiffel Tower, which is likely on their not-to-be missed list. The best time to go is clearly after dusk when the lights are turned on. It takes 20,000 bulbs to fully illuminate the tower and on the stroke of the hour they begin to sparkle and flash for an exhilarating five minutes. The Champ de Mars itself, the broad avenue that leads from the Seine to the tower is brightly lit as well.

As for the Christmas Village, its actual location is on the Quai Jacques-Chirac. It's comprised of around 60 wooden chalets and pretty much follows the pattern of other Alsatian-inspired Christmas markets in Paris – certainly in terms of food, drink and many of the items for sale.

There are some children's workshops and Christmas music. In other words, there may not be a whole lot of novelty, but oh, that Eiffel Tower!



Saint-Germain-des-Prés Christmas Village

Does a Christmas market have to be tucked away off the street in its own designated enclosure to draw the crowds? Not judging by the popularity of the *Village de Noël de Saint-Germain-des-Prés*. Rows of wooden chalets decked with lights and greenery are tightly packed along the northern side of boulevard Saint Germain. Since this is one of the chicest streets in one of the chicest *quartiers* on the Left Bank, it's not surprising to see caviar and truffles side by side with fine handmade leather goods, jewelry, decorative items for the home, and other luxurious items.

The market is set against the backdrop of the historic Eglise Saint-Germain-des-Prés, the oldest church in Paris, consecrated in the year 543. A restoration of the colorfully painted walls, structural beams and ceilings that were famously added during the latter part of the 19th century has been underway for several years and it is well worth a visit inside to admire the work already completed.



Le Marché de Noël en Alsace



© Hugh Llewelyn / Wikimedia Commons

As the gateway to Alsace for almost as long as there's been train travel in France, the Gare de l'Est is the logical home for the *Marché de Noël en Alsace*. This market is undeniably the place in Paris to stock up on (and sample) the region's traditional Christmastime specialties.

There are bottles and cases of Alsatian whites, *crémants*, *eaux de vie* and, yes, whisky; savory *choucroute*, an abundance of *charcuterie*, *foie gras*, potato *galettes*, and Munster. Sated yet, because there are still pretzels, gingerbread, kougelhopf, Alsatian Christmas cookies known as *bredele*, and for St. Nicholas Day on December 6, miniature brioches called *Mannele*, similar in shape to gingerbread men, in honor of the saint and the season.

While food and drink may dominate the market stalls, they're only part of the story. Those in search of more lasting mementos can choose among handmade Christmas decorations for tree and home, kitchen linens, Advent wreaths, et al.

Parc de la Villette

Newcomer *Noël la Villette*, at the Fontaine-aux-Lions in Parc la Villette, is themed as a Swiss Christmas village. Unlike other Christmas markets in Paris, its many little chalets are scattered about on pathways, not lined up in straight rows facing each other, which really does lend it a village feel.

Quite a few of the products for sale come from well-known Swiss designers and brands, but there's plenty to do besides shop. Rides include a Ferris wheel, a carousel, and one where kids (and parents) spin around gently while seated inside hollowed-out Christmas tree balls. The skating rink rents more than just skates. There are children's reindeer-shaped skating trainers and ice sleds for parents to push their little kids around the ice.



One corner of the market is all about street food. In addition to *raclette* and other Swiss favorites, there's a wide range of tempting international bites – Austrian Kaiserschmarrn, American BBQ from MELT, Mexican tacos, Tibetan momos, and plenty more. And, speaking of *raclette*, there's an Indian version where it's served on naan. For a more leisurely dining experience, the spacious Zurich Fondue Chalet fits the bill.

Lastly, kudos to the designers for providing ample seating – not a given in a Christmas market. In addition to outdoor benches, there are quaintly furnished huts with comfortable couches and chairs where visitors can shelter from the cold. Several spherical fire pits for warming hands are strategically positioned around the edge of the fountain.



La Défense Christmas Market

The *Marché de Noël la Défense* is well known as the largest Christmas market in the Ile de France region, but even more interesting is that it is almost certainly the *first* Christmas market in Paris, having opened back in 1995. Set against the rather austere backdrop of the monumental Grande Arche de la Défense and its surrounding skyscrapers, the originators of what went on to become an annual event, saw it rather as a “magical urban landscape” and did their best to create an atmosphere of warmth and welcome for visitors.

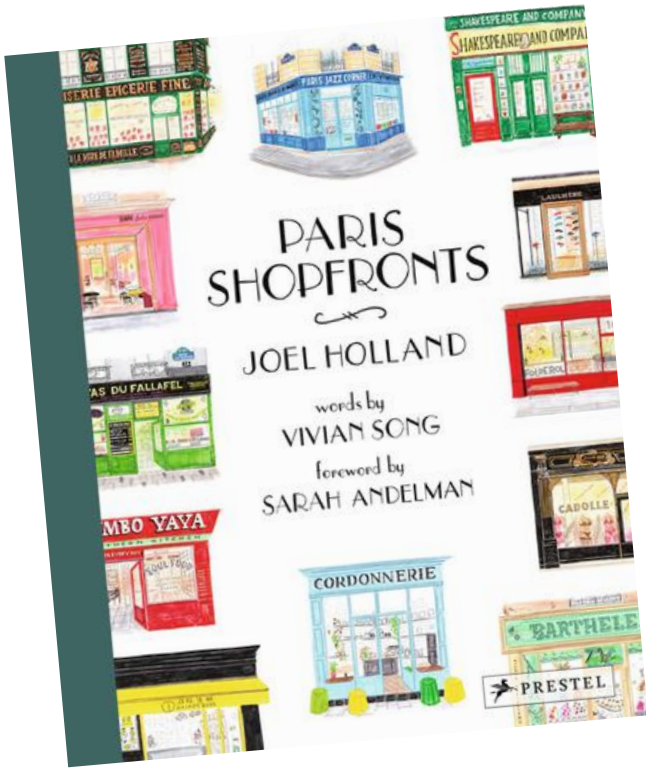
With more than 300 chalets filled with the usual Christmas-market goodies, it’s a good place simply to stroll, shop for gifts, and sample all manner of seasonal food and drink. For a more active visit, skates are available for rent at the brightly-lit outdoor ice rink. And there is definitely plenty to do for kids and families. Children can personally meet not just *le Père Noël*, but also *la Mère Noël*, i.e. both Santa and Mrs. Claus. There are craft workshops led by elves, a carousel and other carnival rides, and costumed characters parading about or performing magic tricks, juggling, etc. It’s a good idea to consult the events calendar to find just the right experience.



BONJOUR PARIS CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE



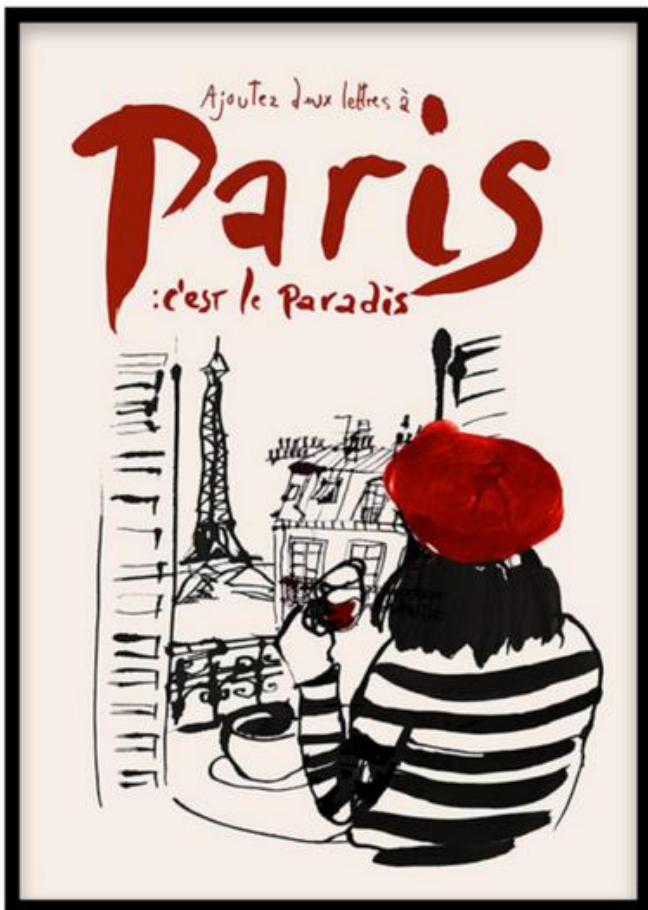
Here are 12 of our favorite picks for gifting this year...



A coffee-table stroll
through Paris
\$30



Iconic foldable
Parisian tote from
Longchamp
\$155



Chic Parisian beret
fashion print from
Desenio
\$26

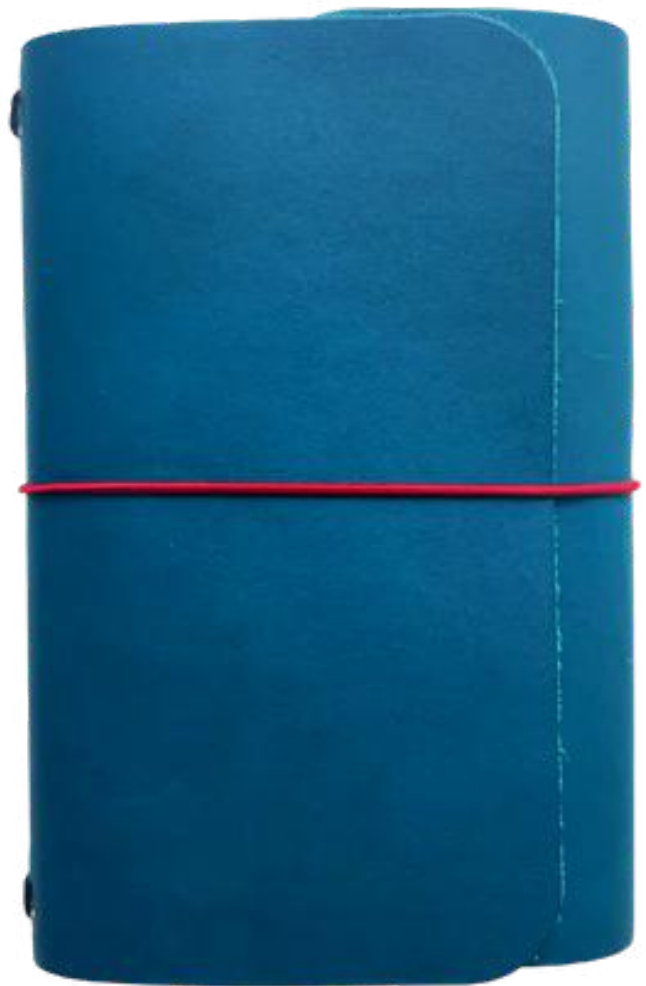


Personalized zinc
roof tile keyrings
\$25



Astier de Villatte
Moulin Rouge tree
ornament

\$60



Chic leather Louise
Carmen notebook

\$175



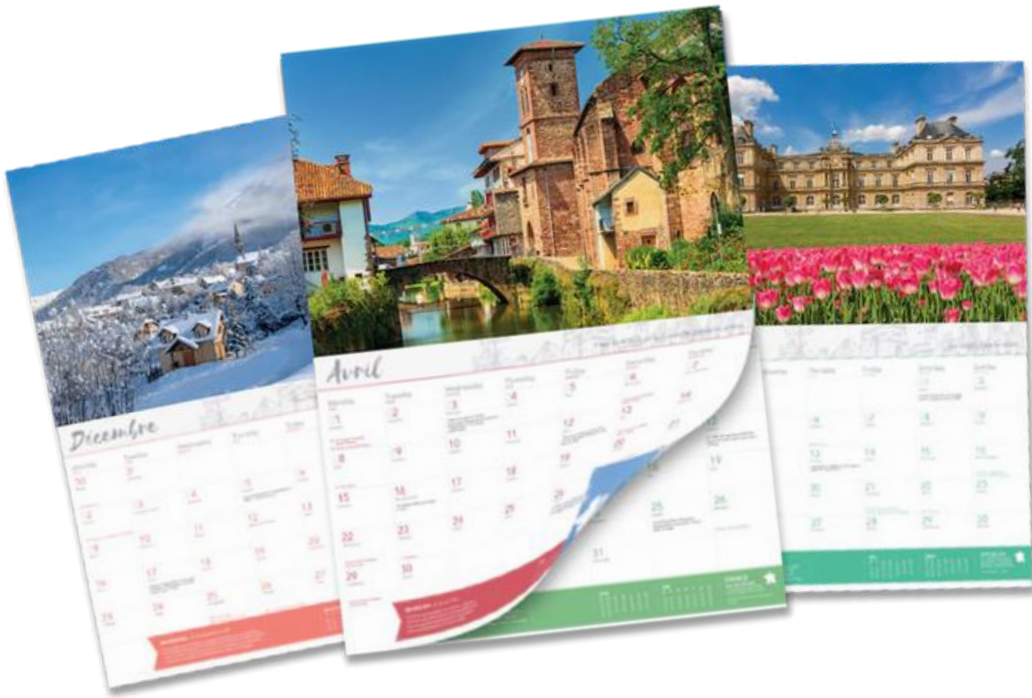
Sophisticated Diptyque
fragrance

\$255



Elegant Pierre
Hermé macarons

\$110



Plan your year with
postcard-perfect
France
\$19.95



Classic
Christmas
Le Creuset
\$365



La Roche-Posay
skincare
\$25



Cute raclette
Jellycat plush
\$35

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