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**Design Hotels Sprouting Up In Paris**

By Monique Burns

With excellent hotels, renowned restaurants, masterpiece-filled museums, an efficient Métro, and a sophisticated populace that appreciates the finer things of life, it's no wonder Paris is the world's number one destination. In a 2009 study of more than 50 cities, Paris—which attracts 29 million visitors annually—was ranked "most charismatic." Not content to rest on its laurels, the City of Light has outdone itself in 2010, with a spate of new and refurbished "design hotels." From now through 2011, expect deluxe Raffles, Shangri-La and W hotels; more new and restored boutique hotels; the re-opening of the Impressionist galleries at the Musée d'Orsay, and a once-in-a-lifetime Monet exhibit at the Grand Palais. And that's just for starters....



**New Ways to Get Around**

Walking is still the best way to discover Paris, from its side streets and neighborhood bistros to its hidden gardens and small museums. The award-winning subsidiary of Euroquest, French Experience ([www.frenchexperience.com](http://www.frenchexperience.com)) recently added several innovative walking tours. The two-hour French Revolution Walking Tour highlights historic spots like the Bastille, and the Place de la Concorde where Louis XIV and Marie Antoinette lost their heads (\$16.96). Marking the 40th anniversary of the death of Doors lead singer, the three-hour Jim Morrison Walking Tour visits places where the "Lizard King" wrote poetry, made recordings, spent his last night and was buried (\$33.11). Paris Villages Bike Tour is a three-hour lark through central Paris (\$48.05 adults, \$39.57 children).

The fastest, most efficient way to get around town is the Métro system, best navigated with a Paris Visite pass ([www.parismetrom.com](http://www.parismetrom.com)). Vélib ([www.velib.paris.fr](http://www.velib.paris.fr)), a new program offering 20,600 bicycles at 1,800 stands around the capital, gives visitors a healthier, greener alternative. You can pick up a tan bike virtually anywhere, ride it to a restaurant or attraction, leave it there, then either pick up another bike later, or take the Métro, or a taxi (now being fitted with rooftop indicators that turn green when they're available and red when they're occupied). In September 2011, the similar Autolib' service will provide 3,000 GPS-equipped electric cars at 1,000 stations in Paris (and its outskirts). Reservations will be accepted online or by telephone.

**Neighborhood Renaissance: Bercy and the Eiffel Tower Districts**

In recent years, the Eiffel Tower area, on both sides of the Seine, has been rapidly expanding. On the Left Bank, development was spurred four years ago by the re-opening of the renovated Musée du Quai Branly ([www.quaibranlı.fr](http://www.quaibranlı.fr)), with remarkable African, Asian and Oceanic art. Just a 20-minute drive from Orly International Airport and a short walk from the Bir-Hakeim Métro station is the four-star Novotel Paris Eiffel ([www.novotel.com](http://www.novotel.com)), part of France's largest chain-hotel group, Accor Hotels, which includes the luxury Sofitel and Pullman brands. The 765-room Novotel Paris Eiffel has an indoor pool with a retractable roof, a sauna and fitness room, and two excellent restaurants: L'Envie for traditional French food, and Benky, with authentic Japanese food. Doubles start at \$355; travel-agent discounts are available. Opposite the Eiffel Tower, the Right Bank, from the Trocadéro district west to the Bois de Boulogne, has seen a flurry of new boutique hotels and will welcome the luxury Shangri-La Paris in December (see "Hotels" section below).

Paris' once-mysterious East is becoming increasingly well-known. East of the Marais, the Bastille district has grown rapidly since the contemporary-style Opera House opened in July 1989. Just north, the trendy Temple district around the Place de la République recently welcomed the New York-style Coffee Shop Merce and the Muse ([www.merceandthemuse.com](http://www.merceandthemuse.com)), known for its heart-shaped carrot cakes. Also new to the area is the world's first "detox hotel." The 41-room Hôtel Gabriel ([www.hotel-gabriel-paris.com](http://www.hotel-gabriel-paris.com)) features all-white rooms with non-allergenic bedding and NightCove light-and-musical sensory therapy to speed recovery from jet lag and promote sleep. There's also a massage room, and a breakfast room/bar serving breakfast, herbal teas and healthy cocktails. Doubles start at \$246.

The big neighborhood news is the Bercy district, Paris' "Lower East Side," in the heart of the 12th arrondissement. At Orly International Airport's back door and 10 minutes from central Paris via the spotless Métro line 14, Bercy is the perfect overnight option for travelers seeking charm and value. In Bercy Village ([www.bercyvillage.com](http://www.bercyvillage.com)), near the Cour St. Emilion Métro stop, former wine warehouses have been transformed into nearly a dozen trendy restaurants and nightspots, including Chai 33, where innovative French dishes are paired with wines from a 4,000-bottle cellar; The Frog, an English-style pub and microbrewery; Hippopotamus for excellent steaks and hamburgers, and Le Saint M', a traditional bistro offering wines by the glass. Cheek-by-jowl with these eateries are boutiques like Oliviers & Co. for olives, olive oil and olive-infused tapenades and biscuits; L'Occitane for Provençal perfumes, and La Cure Gourmande for delectable cookies, candies and chocolates. There's also a Multiplexe UGC movie theater here.



Steps from Bercy Village, the four-star Hôtel Pullman Paris Bercy ([www.pullman-paris-bercy.com](http://www.pullman-paris-bercy.com)) has 396 well-appointed contemporary rooms featuring comfortable beds with thick duvets, portable Club Med exercise equipment, and views stretching to the Eiffel Tower and Montmartre. The Café Ké menu includes several honey-accented dishes, a reminder that the hotel contributes to local aparies to support dwindling bee populations. Few things taste better than a dollop of acacia or chestnut honey on a morning croissant. Doubles start at \$274.

Around the corner from the Hôtel Pullman is the remarkable Musée des Arts Forains ([www.arts-forains.com](http://www.arts-forains.com)), a fascinating collection of beautifully carved Belle-Epoque fair and circus antiques, including merry-go-rounds and calliopes. To plan special events here or elsewhere in Bercy—including the Hôtel Pullman and its renovated, three-star sister hotels, the 151-room Novotel and

the 361-room Hôtel All Seasons—contact ParisB.Events ([www.parisbevents.com](http://www.parisbevents.com)).

**Culture, From Monet to Modern**

In the heart of Paris, at the Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais ([www.grandpalais.fr](http://www.grandpalais.fr)), the blockbuster Claude Monet (1840-1926) exhibit continues through January 11. The 200 Impressionist works, loaned from top museums worldwide, celebrate Monet's life, from the early Normandy seascapes to the famous waterlilies of Giverny. A Monet retrospective of this magnitude will not be seen for several decades, say experts.

In Bercy, at the Cinémathèque Française ([www.cinematheque.fr](http://www.cinematheque.fr)) until January 16, "Brune Blond" explores real and mythic feminine beauty through the metaphor of hair. The exhibit includes film projections, Art Nouveau lithographs, a Rodin bronze and contemporary installations.

Through January 24, the Musée Jacquemart-André ([www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com](http://www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com)), in the 8th arrondissement, mounts the exhibit, "Rubens, Poussin and 17th Century Artists," highlighting the Flemish Movement in 17th-century France.

The Musée d'Art Moderne ([www.mam.paris.fr](http://www.mam.paris.fr)) hosts a Basquiat retrospective through January 30. The youngest and first black artist to show at the Whitney Biennial, 27-year-old Jean-Michel Basquiat died in 1988, but not before completing a body of colorful graffiti-like Neo-Expressionist works. At press time, culture mavens awaited the fall opening of the Cité de la Mode et du Design on the Quai d'Austerlitz. Enhanced with green piping, the \$62-million structure—designed by Jakob + MacFarlane of Pompidou Center restaurant fame—will be the new home of the Institut Français de la Mode (IFM) and will house design studios, restaurants, exhibition and performance spaces, and a rooftop park.

March brings the much-anticipated re-opening of the Musée d'Orsay's ([www.musee-orsay.fr](http://www.musee-orsay.fr)) Impressionist and Post-Impressionist galleries. In 2011, the museum mounts several major exhibits, including "Manet, the Man Who Invented Modern Art," April 5-July 3.

To defray museum fees, consider purchasing the Paris Museum Pass ([www.MuseumPass.com](http://www.MuseumPass.com)), offering free entry to more than 60 museums and monuments, including such outlying attractions as the Versailles Château.

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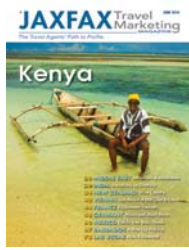
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**Hotel News: Five-Star "Palaces" and Designer Boutiques**

Paris is in the throes of a hotel building-and-restoration boom headlined by top French designers. Many "design hotels" feature all-white interiors, or interiors dominated by grays, browns or blacks, and accented with splashes of color. Walls and public spaces are adorned with contemporary paintings and sculpture.

Among the city's palace hotels, the fall opening of Le Royal Monceau ([www.raffles.com](http://www.raffles.com)), Raffles' first European property, has been eagerly awaited. On the Right Bank, between the Arc de Triomphe and the 18th-century Parc Monceau, the deluxe hotel features interiors by French designer Philippe Starck. In addition to an art gallery, 100-space cinema, spa, pool and hammam, cigar bar, and garden, there are two gourmet restaurants: Il Carpaccio for Italian dishes and La Cuisine for innovative French bourgeois dishes. Rates to be announced.

December 2010 brings the luxury Shangri-La Paris ([www.shangri-la.com](http://www.shangri-la.com)), the first European hotel by Shangri-La Hotels. In the 16th arrondissement, adjacent to the Trocadéro, the ornate 19th-century building will have 81 plush guest rooms and suites, many with private terraces and Eiffel Tower views. Dining options include a gourmet restaurant headed by renowned chef Philippe Labbé, a haute-Cantonese restaurant with a chef and maitre d' from Hong Kong, and a more casual French-Asian restaurant. Rates to be announced.

W Paris Opéra ([www.wparisopera.com](http://www.wparisopera.com)), a deluxe Westin property steps from the ornate Opéra Garnier, is expected to open October 2011 with 90 rooms featuring white interiors, with color and wood accents, a gourmet restaurant and a more casual W Café.

Known for its three-star Alain Ducasse restaurant and its Dior Institut spa, the five-star Plaza Athénée ([www.plaza-athenee-paris.com](http://www.plaza-athenee-paris.com)) partners with Disneyland Paris this holiday season to bring a "Magic Window," featuring a different live Disney character on the hotel façade every Wednesday, December 1-22. If you're not staying at the 191-room hotel, stop by to see who's appearing, and enjoy the sumptuous afternoon tea and pastries. Doubles start at \$807. The grand hotel's sister hotel, Le Meurice ([www.lemeurice.com](http://www.lemeurice.com)), overlooking the Tuileries Gardens, sports newly renovated rooms. Doubles start at \$533.

Also in the 8th arrondissement, the four-star Sofitel Paris Le Faubourg ([www.sofitel.com](http://www.sofitel.com)) has new ivory, gray and black designer suites, including 549-square-foot Opéra Suites with their own hammams, and a 1,076-square-foot Couture Apartment with a living room, 12-seat dining room, steam shower and Jacuzzi. Doubles cost \$575.

At the Ritz Paris ([www.ritzparis.com](http://www.ritzparis.com)), there's a new High Tea with grands crus gourmet teas from China and Chile, and finger sandwiches, pastries and clotted cream, on Saturday, 3-6 p.m., in the Salon d'Été. Barman Colin Field, who once served Ernest Hemingway, serves up cocktail lessons in the Hemingway Bar, Saturday, 3-5 p.m. Doubles start at \$550.

The Park Hyatt Paris-Vendôme ([www.paris.vendome.hyatt.com](http://www.paris.vendome.hyatt.com)) welcomes new chef Jean-François Rouquette, whose resume includes Taillevent and Le Crillon. Rouquette works his magic at several in-house restaurants, including Pur, which has a separate Chef's Table. Doubles start at \$670. Radisson's newest Paris hotel, the Radisson Blu Le Metropolitan, Paris Eiffel ([www.radissonblu.com](http://www.radissonblu.com)), just steps from the Trocadéro, features black, brown and white designer interiors with hardwood floors, a lounge bar with a fireplace and an indoor pool. Doubles start at \$548.

In other news, Hôtel Fouquet's Barrière ([www.fouquets-barriere.com](http://www.fouquets-barriere.com)) was named one of only six "leading green" hotels in Europe by Sustainable Travel International. The hotel's eco-initiatives include converting waste into light and heat, and making E-Tolex bicycles and hybrid limousines available to guests. Doubles start at \$975.

Paris presents a dizzying array of small boutique and design hotels. In central Paris, not far from the Place Vendôme, this fall's newest star is the five-star Hôtel Le Burgundy ([www.leburgundy.com](http://www.leburgundy.com)) whose stylish lobby, bar and restaurant are graced by sculptures, lithographs and paintings. The 59-room hotel also has a sauna, hammam steam bath, and swimming pool. Doubles begin at \$547.

In the Opéra district, the four-star Hôtel Banke ([www.derbyhotels.com](http://www.derbyhotels.com)) has 94 contemporary rooms with marble baths, the Josephin restaurant serving Spanish cuisine, and Lolabar for tapas and cocktails. Doubles start at \$125. Also new to the Opéra district is the four-star Best Western Premier Opéra Diamond ([www.paris-hotel-diamond.com](http://www.paris-hotel-diamond.com)) with 30 designer rooms and an interior garden. Doubles start at \$265.

Just opened this fall, in the eighth arrondissement, the Pavillon des Lettres ([www.pavillondeleslettres.com](http://www.pavillondeleslettres.com)) has 26 rooms, each devoted to a letter of the alphabet and a corresponding author, such as "B" for Balzac or "H" for Hugo. Text from the author's book is painted above the bed, and there's a hard copy on the nightstand. Each room has an iPad stocked with international best-sellers. Doubles start at \$410.

In the 16th arrondissement, opposite the Eiffel Tower, the five-star Hôtel Square ([www.hotelsquare.com](http://www.hotelsquare.com)) features a contemporary art gallery, a spa, a private garage, and the Zebra Square restaurant offering both traditional French dishes and fusion cuisine. Doubles start at \$410. Also here is the four-star Hôtel Sezz ([www.hotelsezz.com](http://www.hotelsezz.com)). Designed by a Philippe Starck protégé, the Sezz has 26 large rooms with Artelano chrome beds, as well as a hammam and a Jacuzzi. Doubles start at \$300.

On the Left Bank, in trendy St. Germain des Prés, the recently opened four-star La Belle Juliette ([www.hotel-belle-juliette-paris.com](http://www.hotel-belle-juliette-paris.com)) is named for the 18th-century Frenchwoman whose literary salons included Chateaubriand and Madame de Staël. The spa uses traditional Chinese medicine. Doubles start at \$410.

Air France ([www.airfrance.com](http://www.airfrance.com)), the national carrier, has frequent flights to Paris. For more information on Paris, visit [www.parisinfo.com](http://www.parisinfo.com) or [www.franceguide.com](http://www.franceguide.com).

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**France's Big Summer Festivals**

By Monique Burns

When warm weather returns, Europe turns festive. Spring through fall, music, dance, theater and art festivals enliven the continental agenda, starting with offerings like Florence's Maggio Musicale in May, continuing with events like the Edinburgh International Festival in August, and ending with autumn standouts like Munich's Oktoberfest, celebrating its 200th anniversary this year.

France takes center stage in 2010, hosting two blockbuster events. The first-ever Normandy Impressionist Festival lures visitors to France's northwest province of bucolic meadows, rugged coastlines and historic cities. South, amid the sunny, palm-fringed beaches and yacht-filled harbors of the Côte d'Azur, the International Jazz Festival of Antibes-Juan les Pins—or, simply, Jazz à Juan—celebrates its 50th anniversary as Europe's longest-running jazz festival.

Festival bookings can be tricky, but there's help at hand. For Jazz à Juan, the official tour operator is French Experience, a subsidiary of EuroQuest, based in Hoboken, N.J. In addition to handling ticket sales, French Experience has a three-day/two-night Jazz-à-Juan package for \$558, with a four-star hotel, daily breakfast and transfers. The company can also craft custom tours, from budget to deluxe, of any length, for singles, couples, families with children and those with special interests. For the Normandy Impressionist Festival, French Experience and other companies can arrange tours (see "For More Information" at end of article).

About two dozen two and three-star hotels in Antibes-Juan-les-Pins are offering special festival rates of 82-155 euros (about \$110-\$205), double. In Juan-les-Pins, the 65-room, four-star Hôtel Hélios has a two-night "Jazzy Farniente" package, available July 14-25, offering two nights in a superior double, all breakfasts, hotel taxes, use of the hotel's private beach and two tickets to Jazz à Juan for 549 euros (about \$370) for two. Several other hotels in Antibes-Juan-les-Pins have summer packages.

Visitors to Jazz à Juan also can stay anywhere along the Riviera's 70-mile stretch, from St. Tropez to Monaco. In Cannes, just seven miles south of Juan-les-Pins, the four-star 1835 White Palm Hotel is offering a \$540 daily rate for a deluxe sea-view room with breakfast during the festival, July 14-25. The 134-room hotel, with a rooftop restaurant, thalassotherapy spa and views over Cannes bay, reopened in 2009 after a multimillion-dollar renovation. When booking, mention the promotional code "JAZZ."

**Jazzing it Up on the Côte d'Azur**

At Jazz à Juan 2010, top headliners like guitarist George Benson, vocalist Dee Dee Bridgewater, pianist Keith Jarrett and bassist Marcus Miller take to the main stage. But the 50th edition of the International Jazz Festival of Antibes-Juan-les-Pins promises more than nine magical evenings beside the Riviera's sparkling blue waters. The five-month anniversary party—launched this past April with New Orleans-style jazz parades—continues through August with concerts, jam sessions, jazz-themed tours, food and wine events, art and photo exhibits, and other happenings.

The jazz festival is the main event. Beyond evening performances beneath the pine trees of the seaside Pinède Gould, concerts will be held throughout the day, onstage and in the streets, by individual musicians and groups, including combos from the Conservatory of Music in Antibes and marching bands from U.S. colleges. Jazz à Juan has always been an important venue for young, up-and-coming performers. In fact, many of America's most famous jazz performers, including Dizzy Gillespie and Ella Fitzgerald, were discovered there. At onstage Master Classes, musicians, young and old,



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learn from each other while delighting audiences. At the annual Jazz Revelations, new performers display their singular musical styles while competing against one another.

Evening main-stage performances range from \$21 (standing room) to \$126 (stage-side seats); moderately priced tickets cost \$25-\$40. Several special VIP packages include tickets plus food and drink. Le Club 50, the least expensive, offers VIP box seats for one concert, Champagne and a hot-and-cold buffet on the beach, and after-concert Champagne and a table at the Eden Jazz Club. Prestige VIP evenings cost 500-1,000 euros (about \$660-\$1,326) for two, and 2,400-5,000 euros (about \$3,180-\$6,630) for groups of 10. Beyond the main stage, events are free, or available for a nominal charge, or the price of a cover charge and a few drinks in area nightclubs or restaurants.

When Jazz à Juan takes to the stage, a simultaneous Festival "Off"—also known as "Nights of Juan"—occurs. For Jazz à Juan's 50th anniversary, expect a ramped-up version of this accompanying festival, which showcases a variety of jazz performers in hotels, restaurants, jazz clubs and even the streets. Concerts are free or cost a nominal fee. Festival "Off" details were not available at press time, but should be available now.

**Normandy Impressionist Festival**

Drawn to the beauty and diversity of Normandy's landscapes and seascapes, Monet, Renoir, Degas and other 19th-century Impressionist painters set up their easels in historic cities like Rouen, in Fécamp and Etretat along the rugged Alabaster Coast, in pretty harbor towns like Dieppe and Honfleur, on the beaches of Deauville and Trouville, and in working ports like Cherbourg and Le Havre. Not only did their canvases capture the beauty of nature, they captured life's joie de vivre, the purely visceral pleasure human beings take in romantic seaside rambles, rollicking dance parties, and good food and wine enjoyed in the great outdoors.

Fittingly, art is just part of the draw at the Normandy Impressionist Festival. Spanning four months, from June through September, the Normandy Impressionist Festival celebrates the painters' lives and work with woodland picnics, boat rides on the Seine, parties in riverside dance bars called guinguettes, music and theater performances, sound-and-light shows, video screenings and outdoor cinema, and art and photography exhibits. Of more than 200 events scheduled, there are about 30 major presentations and installations. Following in what organizers call the artists' "vagabond footsteps," events will be staged from one end of Normandy to the other.

On June 20, the Normandy Impressionist Festival officially kicks off with lavish picnics in various locales. On July 13 and 14, to celebrate Bastille Day, balls will be held throughout Normandy. Rouen—where Joan of Arc was burned at the stake and where Monet painted his famous cathedral façade series for several months in varying light and weather—will be the scene of the festival's major exhibit, "Une Ville Pour l'Impressionisme: Monet, Pissarro et Gauguin à Rouen," at the Museum of Fine Arts, June 4-September 26.

In nearby Giverny, visitors can explore Claude Monet's House and Gardens, and the next-door Giverny Impressionist Museum, where, April 1-July 18, an exhibit of 60 major works trace the influence of the Seine River on the Impressionists.

Art exhibits and festivals are planned for the cities and towns of the Alabaster Coast, including Dieppe (also hosting the September 10-12 International Kite Festival), Honfleur (home of pre-Impressionist Eugène Boudin), and Fécamp and Etretat (whose dramatic cliffs and offshore rock formations were a favorite Impressionist subject). Major events are slated for Le Havre and Cherbourg as well as the elegant beach towns of Deauville, Trouville and Cabourg. Children can enjoy special exhibits at the Zoological and Botanical Park in Clères, and the Festyland theme park in Caen, nor far from the World War II D-Day landing beaches.

**For More Information**

For more information on Jazz à Juan, log on to [www.jazzajuan.com](http://www.jazzajuan.com) or [www.antibesjuanlespins.com](http://www.antibesjuanlespins.com). For tickets and tour bookings, contact French Experience at [www.frenchexperience.com](http://www.frenchexperience.com); 800-283-7262 or 212-986-3800; [customercare@frenchexperience.com](mailto:customercare@frenchexperience.com). For the Hôtel Hélios package, "Jazzy Famiente," contact [www.hotelhelios.fr](http://www.hotelhelios.fr); e-mail [info@hotel-helios.fr](mailto:info@hotel-helios.fr). For the special 1835 White Palm Hotel festival promotional rate, contact [www.1835-hotel.com](http://www.1835-hotel.com) or email [reservations@1835-hotel.com](mailto:reservations@1835-hotel.com).

For a calendar of Normandy Impressionist Festival events, visit [www.normandy-tourism.org](http://www.normandy-tourism.org). Major tour operators include Avant Destinations ([www.avantdestinations.com](http://www.avantdestinations.com)), Enchanted France ([www.enchanted-france.com](http://www.enchanted-france.com)), Eurobound ([www.eurobound.com](http://www.eurobound.com)), France Vacations ([www.francevacations.net](http://www.francevacations.net)) and French Experience ([www.frenchexperience.com](http://www.frenchexperience.com)). A complete listing of U.S.-based tour operators specializing in France can be found at [www.franceguide.com/travel-trade](http://www.franceguide.com/travel-trade).

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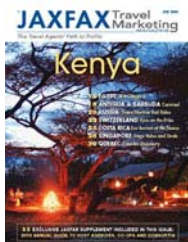
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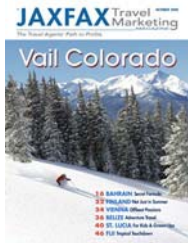
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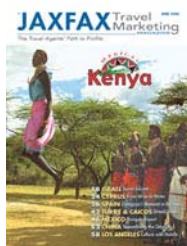


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