



Paris really is the perfect place for shopping...

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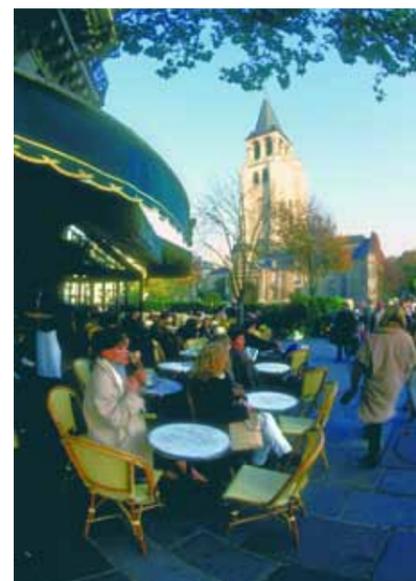
It is comforting to know only a train ride away, there is a whole new culture, cuisine and copious shops to discover, little wonder this capital city is so coveted. Like London, shopping is effortless; the metro in Paris couldn't be easier. Base yourself in a logistically logical place, for instance, as I did recently, close to the Odeon metro, because for me the more I explored by foot the sensational stage that the streets of Paris offer, with 17,500 shops and counting, the better. Walking is the way to go, you are sure to stumble upon surprises, like Boot Café; a former cobblers and officially the dinkiest café in Le Marais district – a mere two mini tables to sit at whilst savouring your coffee. Medieval Le Marais, previously the residence of aristocracy pre-revolution, offers a happy medium between boho and upmarket chic. Here you will find Merci, the department store firmly on my 'to revisit' list, it fashionably houses all your needs, from personal, to home, to office. Once you're done, have a coffee in the café next door – same name, but with walls lined with second hand books, and warmly welcoming.

Le Marais is renowned for cool concept stores open until around 7pm, with brands not readily found elsewhere. Think edgy but high-end Notting Hill meets quirky on-trend Shoreditch. For affordable unique pieces head to Aboudabibazar, their plush embroidered patches to pimp up your coat collars or elsewhere, are exquisite. Little people also get a look in and chance to out-dress their elders, a visit to one-of-a-kind children's concept store Bonton sees to their needs nicely. For this year's glam gothic look, Springsioux guarantees a wide range of beautiful black statement pieces. Bargain hunters should head to St Placide, here you will find a multitude of high fashion labels at low prices. Mouton à Cinq Pattes stands out among them. Close by is another megastore; Le Bon Marché, enveloping the usual designer wears, it's one of the best food halls I've visited in Paris, with multitudes of mustards, teas, salted caramels, chocolates, cakes, biscuits, breads, candied chestnuts, meats, cheeses, you name it, they've got it all wrapped up in devastatingly divine gold patterned packaging. The other indulgent foodie stop is Paris' answer to Harrods; Galleries Lafayette which has an entire stand alone building selling avant-garde gourmet treats to make any true gourmand weak at the knees.

Paris is synonymous with perfume, with France being

considered the birthplace, so buying a bottle or two is a given. Legendary brand Serge Lutet can be found within the original 18th century aristocratic shopping haven; Palais-Royal. A stone's throw away is both the Louvre and adjacent show-stopping shopping centre Carrousel du Louvre, where foremost perfume brand Fragonard can be found. Make your own scent with a fun informative workshop at Candora for 75 euros, or combine a purchase with perfume proficiency by visiting newly opened Le Grand Musée Du Parfum.

Interweave shopping with still moments sitting in a café. I recommend Café Du Flore and nearby Les Deux Magots, located within Saint-Germain-des-Prés, famed as being popular with acclaimed literary folk and the optimum place to soak up the Parisian atmosphere.



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