BYTES QUARTERLY MAGAZINE PARIS SPECIAL PREVIEW

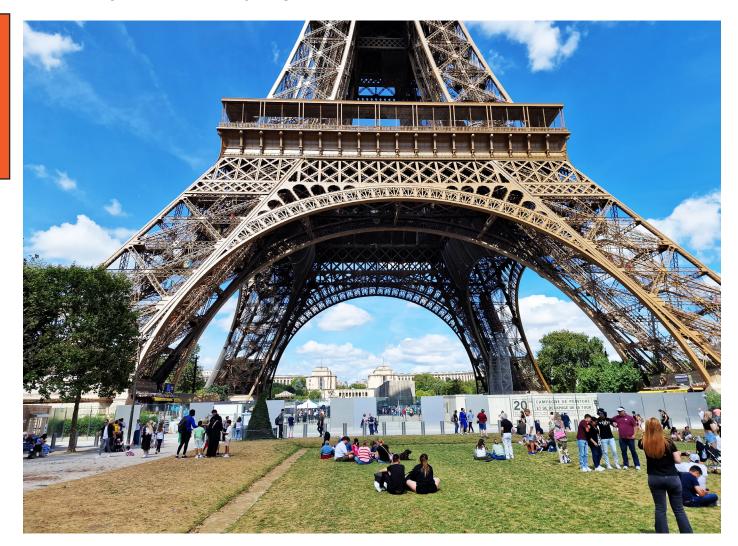
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TRAVEL FEATURE: PARIS FRENCH ROMANCE

Step into the radiant city of light, love, and art – Paris! This enchanting metropolis, steeped in a rich history and romance, has been selling itself as a dream come true for travelers for centuries – well, at least for those travelers who inform themselves beforehand and know which arrondissements and neighborhoods guarantee the most fascinating and beautiful experiences. From majestic architectural wonders and world-renowned museums to refined gastronomy and bustling streets, Paris is among the most stunning destinations to be found in Europe. However, like any major city, the French capital also has its share of dreary and unattractive neighborhoods, with desolate streets marked by vandalism or poverty. But those who manage to avoid the infamous banlieues and less appetizing alleyways can wander around with open mouths for hours on end, fully immersing themselves in the countless pleasures that the City of Light has to offer.



We've visited Paris many times, so it was a bit of a dilemma: should we include some of our previous experiences in our travel article, or focus only on our most recent trip to Disneyland Paris and the 'Semaine de la Mode Homme Prêt-à-Porter' (the ready-to-wear fashion week for men)? Ultimately, we decided to concentrate on the past 2 months, as there were simply too many great experiences to be had during just a short period of time.

History

The rich history of Paris spans over two thousand years. Founded by the Gallic tribe Parisii on an island in the River Seine, the city quickly grew into a thriving settlement known as 'Lutetia Parisiorum'. Roman rule followed in the 1st century BC, renaming the city as 'Lutetia'. Roman influences gave rise to impressive structures, some of which can still be seen in modern-day Parisian buildings.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, Paris faced successive Germanic invasions until it became the capital of the Frankish Empire under Clovis I in the 5th century. In the centuries that followed, Paris grew into a significant hub for trade and culture. During the Middle Ages, Paris flourished as a commercial city and Christian center. The majestic Notre-Dame Cathedral and Sorbonne University were established. Under Louis XIV, Paris underwent a transformation in the 17th century, becoming a city of grandeur and splendor, known as the 'Golden Age' of France.

The French Revolution of 1789 brought about significant changes, with the storming of the Bastille and Paris being declared the capital of the new republic. During this time,



many aristocratic buildings were destroyed. Still, there were more buildings built as well, including the Eiffel Tower, which instantly became an iconic symbol of the city.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, Paris became a global center for art, culture, and fashion. It also endured significant historical events, including World War II. After the liberation, Paris recovered and became a symbol of freedom and brotherhood.

Today, Paris remains a beloved destination with stunning landmarks, a vibrant culture, and exquisite gastronomy. The profound influence of its history has shaped Paris into the timeless symbol of elegance, romance, and sophistication that it is today.

Transportation

The transportation system in Paris is extensive and efficient, making it easy to explore the city and its attractions. Whether you choose the metro, bus, tram, or bike, public transportation provides a seamless way to get around.

Paris' **metro network** is among the most extensive in the world, connecting virtually every neighborhood. With numbered lines from 1 to 14, each with its own color on the metro map, navigating is a breeze.

Metro stations are well-marked and often provide connections to other modes of transport. The metro system is not only fast and efficient but also an excellent way to bypass the traffic congestion that so often plagues the city proper. While some trains may be outdated and experience noise and gusts of wind through their window slits, this is not the norm.

The **bus system** in Paris is a comprehensive alternative, especially when the metro doesn't reach all the places you want to go. Buses run regularly, although some stops could be better indicated. For a picturesque route, there's the tram network, although it's more limited. The **Velib bike-sharing** system offers an active way to discover the city. Paris has bike lanes, but be cautious on busy streets. Whatever the case, cycling provides flexibility to explore hidden gems.

For a relaxing journey through Paris, there is the option of **boat tours** on the Seine. Companies offer cruises along iconic landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower, Notre-Dame, and the Louvre. Our recommendation: Green River Cruises, which we'll tell you more about below!

Accomodations

Paris offers a wide range of accommodations, from boutique hotels to five-star stays. The city is famous for its lavish luxury and glamour, a characteristic that certainly seeps into its accommodations, as there is no shortage of extensive shortand long-stay options.

The city offers numerous prominent hotels where you can stay in style and where the service is impeccable. The idea of a luxurious night's stay in Paris in a regal suite with a hot tub, to be enjoyed with a bottle of champagne next to it. In fact, hotel availability here may be more extensive than in almost any other city on the European continent, although the exact figures are difficult to determine. Here are two of our favorites to get you started!

La Maison Favert: Luxurious and Cozy

If you're looking for a stay in the heart of Paris and want to soak up the romantic atmosphere that characterizes the city, then La Maison Favert is an absolute gem. This beautiful boutique hotel is located in a serene spot on Place Boieldieu, yet close to the main attractions of Paris.

Surrounded by historic buildings and charming streets, it's perfect for leisurely walks and for immersing yourself in the city's 'douceur de vivre.' La Maison Favert is managed by the same family behind Le Narcisse Blanc and exudes an 18th-century style. It pays homage to artists Justine and Charles Favart, with Charles being the very first director of the nearby Opéra Comique. Their influence can still be felt in the hotel through its refined paneling and classic wallpaper. While the vintage atmosphere is prominent, everything feels contemporary and up-to-date.



During our stay, we enjoyed one of the **stunning suites**, featuring a cozy living area, a beautiful bedroom, and a spacious bathroom. Additionally, there's **La Petite Maison**, a kind of 'house within a house,' offering a stunning view of Place Boieldieu and the Opéra Comique.

One more interesting detail: the charming **breakfast room** transforms into an honesty bar from noon to midnight. Here, you can help yourself to whatever takes your fancy - just make sure to keep track of what you've chosen to eat or drink, as the bill is settled upon checkout. Tea, coffee and water are free, of course, which is quite a blessing.

During your stay, Maison Favert's **wellness center** provides ample opportunities for relaxation and well-being. You'll find a sauna, a cozy relaxation pool, and a small yet clean private fitness room. What the pool lacks in breadth is certainly made up by its length and the darkened lights that help feature its supremely cozy illumination.

Just note that there are no separate weights available, so true fitness freaks who prefer adaptable dumbbells and crossfit enthusiasts who like a large selection of kettlebells may be disappointed. Don't let that keep you from visiting, though there are enough gyms scattered throughout the city.

Mor Info: www.lamaisonfavart.com

Le Narcisse Blanc: An Oasis of Luxury and Romance

This stunning five-star hotel, nestled in the heart of the 7th arrondissement - and almost symbolically in the shadow

La Maison Favert - suite

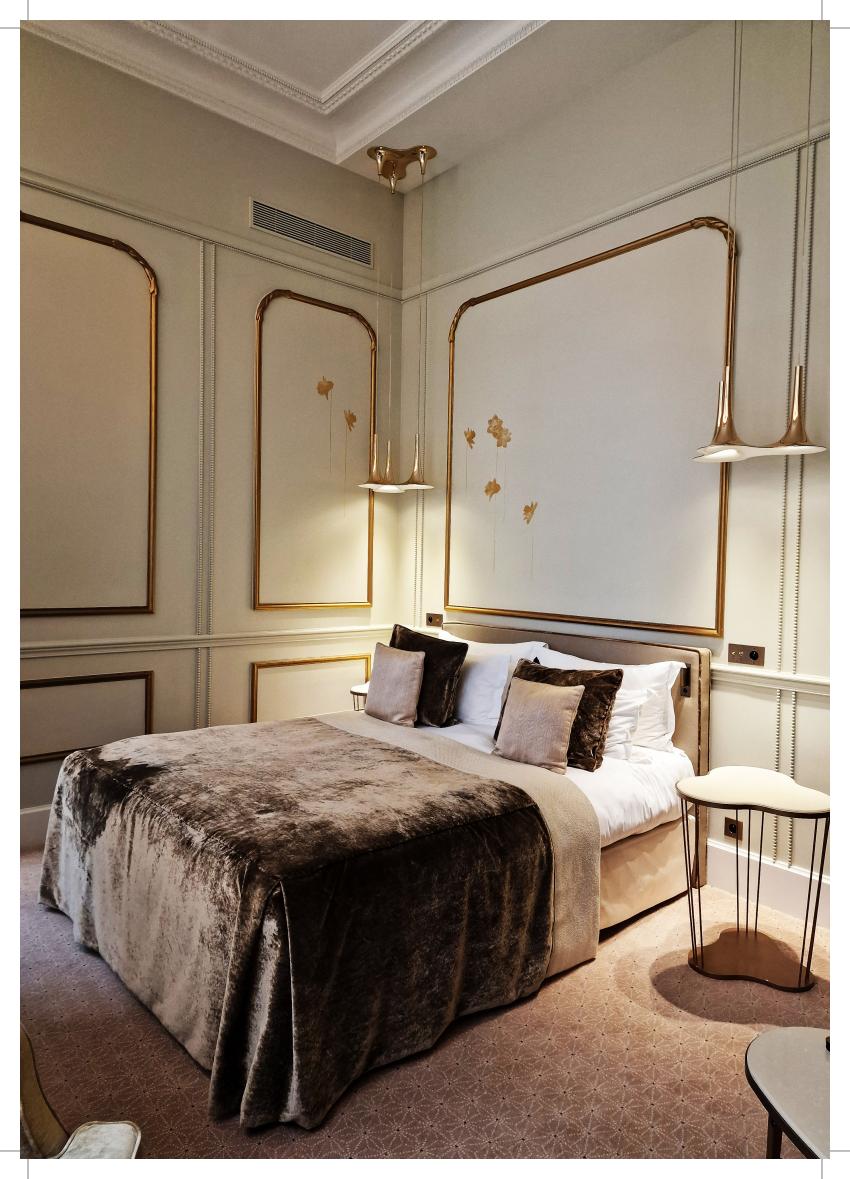
of the majestic Eiffel Tower – welcomes guests with 37 luxuriously appointed **rooms and suites** that are all a nod to the opulent Louis XV style. This decor promises an unmistakable sense of romance and grandeur and the opulent rooms are infused with elegant golden tones, effortlessly exuding an unmistakable timeless charm.

However, the absolute gem of this establishment is the incomparably equipped **spa**. Here, you can indulge yourself with rejuvenating treatments, relax in a beautiful indoor pool stretching 13 meters long, bask in a graceful hammam illuminated with twinkling lights, and rejuvenate in a serene sauna.

After a day of adventures in the streets of Paris, you can return to your lush, spacious room. Here, you'll be welcomed by modern comfort and sublime attention to detail. Every aspect, from carefully chosen furnishings to velvety beds and soft lighting, is designed with clear devotion to provide you with a feeling of tranquility and sophistication.

Under the expert guidance of manager Stéphanie Richiez, every aspect of our stay runs seamlessly. A true highlight of our time here is the gourmet breakfast served in the atmospheric **Cléo restaurant**, which we'll delve into below. It's a wonderful example of how having an excellent dining destination within your hotel can be truly worthwhile! We can enjoy the refined flavors of fresh ingredients, ranging from poached eggs to salmon-topped avocado. Absolutely delightful!

Meer info: www.lenarcisseblanc.com



Gastronomy

Brasserie des Prés: Classic French with a Stunning Bar and an Amazing Ice Cream Corner

We first discovered Brasserie des Prés during our inaugural press visit in 2023. Late at night, we indulged in a few cocktails at the stunning new cocktail bar nestled under the restaurant's roof, a few floors above the bustling Cour du Commerce Saint-André. Intrigued, we returned to sample the restaurant's offerings as well.

We were seated at a (slightly cramped) table that afforded us views of both the lively alleyway and the open kitchen. The young lady serving us maintained a constant smile throughout.

After sipping on a couple of more-than-decent **cocktails**, although not quite reaching the level of excellence we had experienced on the rooftop, we were presented with a sublime **foie gras**, a signature dish of the chef.

The cocktail sauce accompanying the **langoustines** was fairly 'standard' and didn't hold any surprises, but the sauce and spices with the **mussels** were among the best we've ever had in a brasserie – perfectly seasoned and truly elevating the dish. The **coffee with ice cream** we chose for dessert could have been presented in a more elegant manner, but be sure not to leave without venturing into the recently opened wing showcasing **artisanal ice cream**.

More info: lanouvellegarde.com/en/brasserie-des-pres

Cléo: Culinaire betovering in Le Narcisse Blanc & Spa

In the heart of Paris, Cléo - the restaurant at Le Narcisse Blanc & Spa - shines as a true gastronomic gem hidden amongst even more high-profile establishments. Here, chef Bruno Aubin masterfully leads the tasteful kitchen, composed of carefully selected seasonal ingredients.

This young chef gained fame after a successful appearance on the TV show 'Top Chef.' Our first encounter with Aubin was years ago at Le Bristol Paris, where he stood out as the sous chef, and it's great to rediscover his cuisine.

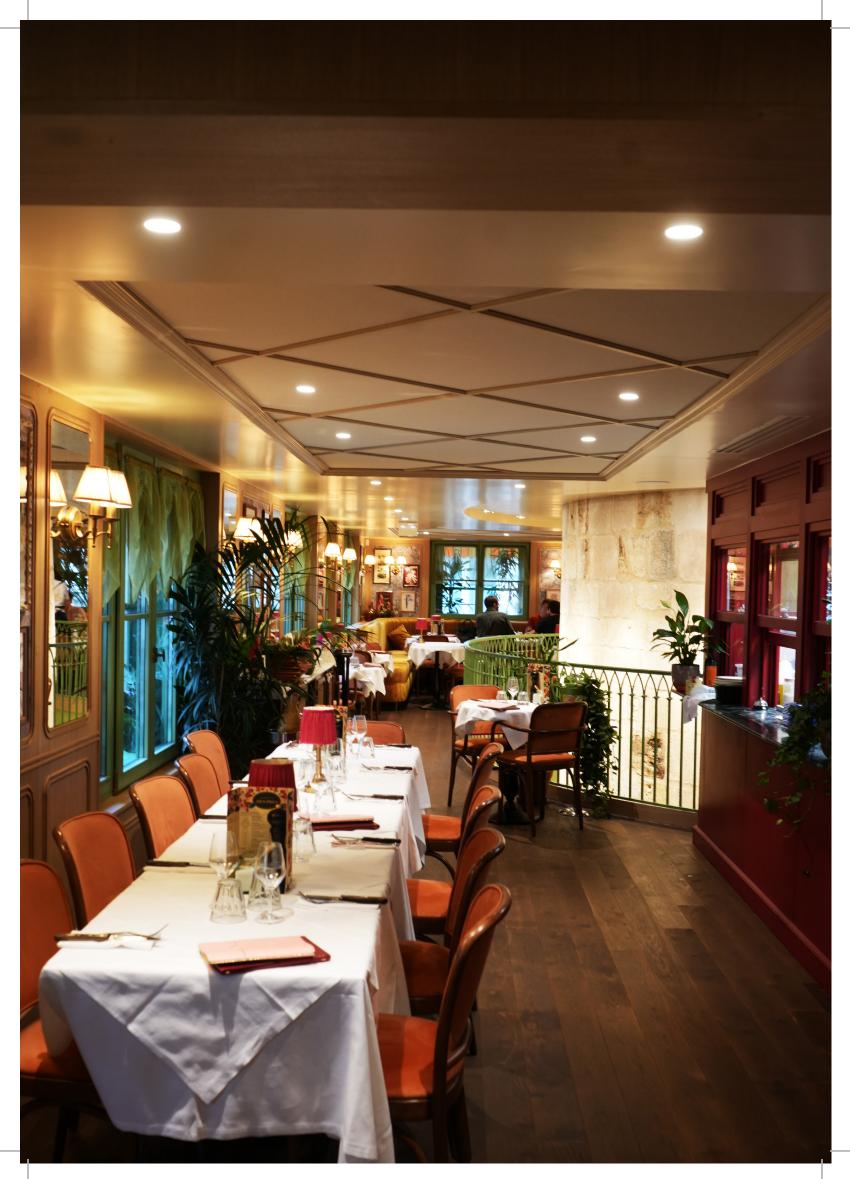
Cléo seduces with classic dishes imbued with a creative twist. The **amberjack**, with its firm texture and subtle flavor, is superbly complemented by the lightly spicy aji amarillo pepper and refreshing yuzu, while roasted sesame seeds add crispy nuances and subtle nutty notes.

The first dishes already reveal how well-versed chef Aubin is with both classic cooking techniques and more modern approaches, and the rest of the menu serves to accentuate that notion.

The crispy **artichokes** surprise with a perfect outer crunch that reveals a deliciously soft, flavorful interior. A touch of nuttiness and subtle sweetness is delicately woven into the earthy taste. Each bite offers a harmonious balance between the creamy texture and crispy exterior, while the accompanying Caesar sauce reveals a true treat. The basil pesto adds a refreshing, spicy aroma in harmony with the subtle sweetness. This interplay creates a sublime balance between earthy and lively flavors.



Above: the mussels of Brasserie des Prés - Right: the interior of Brasserie des Prés on the first floor







Les Liquides





The highlight of the experience is the **'perle blanche' oysters**, with plum vinegar, yuzu cream, herb oil, and Vanuatu pepper. The oceanic flavor of the oysters is complemented by a touch of plum vinegar, while the silky yuzu cream adds a refined citrusy dimension. The harmony between salty and citrus is enhanced by herb oil and the unique Vanuatu pepper, which adds an exciting kick.

The **'flash' seared octopus**, accompanied by tomatochorizo confit, nasturtium flowers, and Sichuan pepper, easily intrigues with its crispy texture and soft interior. The distinctive sweetness of the tomatoes blends with the spiciness of chorizo, while nasturtium flowers and Sichuan pepper provide refreshing and spicy nuances.

The **roasted pigeon with spicy honey**, caramelized onions, blackberries, and Tasmanian pepper offers a delicious contrast between tenderness and spiciness. The variety of flavors and textures creates a balanced taste experience. Cléo's **rice pudding** ends the meal on an extraordinary high.

By the way, the wine pairing is also fantastic: from the carefully selected champagne to the dessert wine, it is very well put together. Here, you can trust the talented sommelier to make good choices, even though one of the staff members who served us will soon be pursuing her athletic ambitions and unfortunately will no longer be found in the dining room.

Without a doubt, this restaurant deserves the attention of Michelin inspectors, as its cuisine offers unparalleled Michelin star quality. Let's hope the major guides take note soon, as the extra recognition would definitely be well deserved! Cléo - octopus



Fitzroy - tacos, pizza, and calamari Fitzroy: Experience It Like a Student Would

Fitzroy, like Tiger and Loulou, is part of the Coolangatta Group. It reflects an Australian-themed beer pub where a **wide selection of beers** is offered, especially from Gallia, a Parisian craft brewery that originated in 1890 as La Nouvelle Gallia and was revived after more than 40 years of inactivity. In addition to beers, there are also cocktails (definitely try the refreshing basil smash) and a variety of dishes available.

The pub spans two floors, with numerous cozy and playful corners, a small stage, and facilities for both disco parties and karaoke nights. The atmosphere here is all about cosiness.

Hungry visitors have plenty of choices, ranging from **fried calamari** with an exquisite tartar sauce to tasty **vegetarian tacos** with avocado, onions, coriander, and green lemon. Moreover, the freshly made oval-shaped *PIZZAS* are particularly delicious. Our **pizza with serrano ham** and arugula is definitely on par with the ones you would find at an average Italian pizzeria!

More info: <u>www.fitzroy-paris.com</u>

More info: www.restaurantcleo.fr



Loulou: Australian Coziness in Paris

Loulou also falls under the umbrella of the Coolangatta Group, which means you can expect those distinctive Australian vibes here as well. This 'canteen' is nestled in the Latin Quarter, just a few minutes' stroll from the Notre Dame. It offers a **variety of coffees**, carefully curated by the folks at Les Ateliers Coutume. The staff mostly consists of welltrained baristas, but that doesn't mean lip-smacking food isn't on the agenda!

Our **carpaccio** takes a delightful twist from the usual renditions that all too often swim in too much oil. Here, pesto takes the spotlight, adding flavor and ensuring the dish is far from dry. The fries sport a hearty, crispy texture, preserving that oh-so-loved potato goodness.

The ingredients in the **poké bowl** are notably fresh – envision sushi-grade salmon, crunchy kidney beans, revitalizing cucumber, juicy mango, radishes, and greens. All of this is perfectly complemented by a delectable sauce.

Loulou places a premium on coziness, yet, there's a tiny letdown. The new **pavlova with red fruits** does have a pleasant taste, but the meringue leans a tad too sweet and sticks to the plate, making it a tad tricky to cut through. Despite this minor hiccup, Loulou remains a charming spot to relish a delightful lunch or brunch – or simply to have an amazing cup of specialty coffee!



Loulou - dessert

More info: <u>www.louloufriendlydiner.com</u>





L'Arbane - the team

L'Arbane - Mutti en virgin cocktail

Cocktail Bars

The City of Light isn't just famed for its gastronomy, but for a whole array of other delights. The world of cocktails is also vibrant and bustling here. Let's dive into a selection of our top picks!

L'Arbane: Cozy and Delightfully Tasty

Nestled in the heart of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris' sixth arrondissement, L'Arbane stands out as one of the more intimate cocktail bars we were able to explore for this feature. Despite its modest size, this fine drinksl haven offers prices that are gentle on the wallet, a philosophy the L'Arbane team attributes to its aim of making cocktails accessible to all without compromising on quality. Quite the opposite, the cocktails on the menu are top-notch.

Take the **'Mutti'** for example, a balanced whisky concoction with a robust, smoky undercurrent. The subtle sweetness of acacia flower, paired with the crispness of apple, orchestrates a symphony of flavors. Noteworthy are the toasted cashews and velvety texture courtesy of egg white – a well-thought-out combination.

In contrast, the **'Calypso'** presents a warm, sweet foundation of rum, coupled with the distinctive woody essence of palo santo. Citrus aromas invigorate the palate while young green peppercorns bring an earthy piquancy, and dry vermouth tempers the rum's sweetness.

Little Red Door - interior

Another intriguing option is the **'Usual Suspects'** (coincidentally, also our favorite film). Here, cognac lays down a sweet foundation, blended with the fruity essence of pear, the savory undertone of celery, and the spicy-bitter kick of chartreuse, a French liqueur. The presentation is simple, just like the food: cherry tomatoes paired with perfectly **seasoned meat**, delightful **burrata**, and homemade **hummus** served with pita bread and baguette. It might seem like a straightforward approach, but it's executed significantly better than in many average brasseries.

Meer info: www.larbane.com

Little Red Door: From Farm to Glass

Numerous cocktail bars strive to earn a spot on the coveted top 50 list, a realm reserved exclusively for the world's most exceptional bars, while others have managed to secure positions within the top 5. Such a tale of triumph belongs to Little Red Door, named after the unmistakable small red door that grants access to the incredibly cozy space, complete with a raised platform in the corner. Our visit coincides with the newly opened in-house laboratory facility on the outskirts of Paris, but the establishment itself resides amidst the vibrant heart of Marais.

This bar isn't only renowned for its feats in the global cocktail scene, but it has also clinched a prestigious sustainability award. The core of their ethos is the 'farm to bar' concept, which involves utilizing premium French ingredients delivered straight from local suppliers to Little Red Door (and its accompanying lab).



Little Red Door - mixing cocktails

The walls are adorned with portraits of local farmers who collaborate closely with the bar, and each cocktail is inspired by a specific ingredient, often leading to the creation of an 'LRD spirit.'

Naturally, classic cocktails grace the menu as well, but our hearts lean towards the exceptionally inventive 'signature cocktails' that epitomize Little Red Door's craftsmanship with flair.

The real showstoppers are the signature cocktails. The **'Olive'** is a surprisingly savory and vegetal concoction, boasting spicy notes of savory perfectly harmonizing with the Nyons Olive spirit and Laballe Grape eau de vie. The **'Walnut'** oozes astringent walnut goodness, amplified by the LRD walnut wine and layered with vanilla and smoky Monkey Shoulder whisky.

'Pepper' delivers a fiery kick with LRD paprika spirit, balanced by Baldoria dry vermouth, and enriched with Rozelieures peated whiskey for a smoky depth. **'Plum'** is equally sensational, featuring LRD plum-infused amaro and the star of the show, Audemus plum kernel fractal. The addition of capreolus dansom eau de vie adds a fruity dimension to this refreshing and intricate cocktail.

Little Red Door's ascent to the top has been fueled not just by its innovative cocktails, but also by its dedication to sustainability and the use of local ingredients. It's an essential destination nestled in the heart of Paris.

Meer info: www.lrdparis.com







Solera Paris: A Visual Cocktail Spectacle

Solera, nestled in Paris' 5th arrondissement, makes an immediate impression for a medley of reasons. The gas leak and explosion adjacent to the bar left devastation in the surrounding neighborhood, yet fortunately, the bar itself sustained minimal damage.

The **'Mongol Fier'** is a visual spectacle with its balloonlike presentation, complete with a rising plume of smoke.

Solera - the Mongol Fiere and the Poulpe Fiction

Despite its straightforward concoction of homemade kiwi syrup, natural white wine, and low-sugar elderflower syrup, the cocktail offers a refreshing and subtly refined twist on the classic spritz. The effervescent touch of Perrier adds that finishing flourish.

'Poulpe Fiction' pays homage to the depths of the ocean, with The Kraken rum serving as its anchor. The rum's dark and rich notes are complemented by vanilla extract for smoothness, passion fruit juice for exotic flair, and grape sugar syrup for a touch of sweetness. Fresh lime juice injects a refreshing citrus kick, ensuring a harmonious balance within the cocktail.

Upon request, Solera even delivers a custom cocktail in a pipe-like apparatus that you 'inhale' from. While the bar might not dish out Paris' absolute top-tier cocktails, the distinctive presentations and outstanding quality elevate these drinks well above the ordinary.

Solera is an absolute must-visit in the city, especially when paired with crispy **'mini croques'** and **crunchy chicken** for a delightful meal.

Meer info: www.soleraparis.wixsite.com/solera



Tiger: Surprising Contrasts in a Single Glass

In the vibrant 6th arrondissement of Paris, nestled within Saint-Germain-des-Prés, you'll stumble upon the charming cocktail haven known as Tiger. Its interior, adorned with lush green palm trees, azure sofas, and warm wood accents, conjures an immediate embrace of a tropical rainforest ambiance. As part of the Coolangatta Group, akin to Fitzroy and Loulou, Tiger boasts an expansive selection of over 100 gins on its menu and offers a diverse array of cocktails featuring an assortment of spirits.

The bartenders enthusiastically recommend the **'Atlas'**, a smoky and spiced cocktail inspired by chakchouka, a North African dish. This unconventional concoction exemplifies Tiger's signature cocktails: unexpected, captivating, and distinct, though not always tailored to every palate. For those less adventurous in their libations, there are thousands of gin and tonic combinations to revel in. The **'Sylvius'** is a well-balanced gin cocktail with invigorating citrus notes, a welcome departure from overly sweet limoncello. **'Hanami'**, drawing inspiration from the Far East, offers floral and fruity flavors in contrast, while the **'Lesley Bramble'** surprises with wild berry cream, cucumber lemonade, and fresh raspberries. The bourbon-based cocktails, like the **'Morning Coffee'**, ensure an impressive array of variety and taste.

Beyond the realm of excellent cocktails, Tiger also boasts delectable fare. The flawlessly **roasted green peppers**, delectable **tomato-caper sandwiches**, and succulent **crispy chicken** with dipping sauce stand as particular highlights. Tiger isn't merely a cocktail destination; it has earned its spot on your culinary exploration list too!

Tiger - the team

More info: <u>www.tiger-paris.com</u>



Activitities

Tiger - bar

In addition to its renowned landmarks, Paris unfolds a tapestry of cultural delights to enrich your journey. For aficionados of art, a pilgrimage to the **Musée d'Orsay** is an absolute must. Housed within a former train station, this museum cradles a treasure trove of impressionist and post-impressionist masterpieces. Here, you'll marvel at works by esteemed artists like Van Gogh, Monet, Renoir, and Degas.

Paris also serves as a paradise for theater and music enthusiasts. The grand **Opéra Garnier**, to cite but one obvious example, offers opulent opera performances within an architectural marvel.



Throughout the city, a multitude of theaters beckon, promising both classical plays and contemporary productions. Paris's nightlife pulses with vibrancy, offering myriad bars, clubs, and cabarets to paint your evenings with excitement.

For those in pursuit of relaxation, a day spent in one of the city's many parks is a splendid idea. **Parc de la Villette** is tailor-made for families, boasting playgrounds, sprawling lawns, and the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, a science museum that offers both educational and enjoyable experiences for the young and old alike.

Another uniquely captivating draw in Paris is the worldrenowned Catacombs. Beneath the city's streets, a vast network of passageways teems with skeletons and bones, arranged in a macabre yet strangely fascinating manner. This place carries an incredible history and delivers an experience that will linger in your memory for a long time.

And here are two more recommendations:

Paris Wine Walks: Wine Culture in the French Capital

Paris Wine Walks offers guided tours led by the charming Brit, Geoffrey, who has fallen in love with the Loire wines. On the fantastic **'Latin Quarter Unbottled'** tour and the **'Wine Your Way Through the Marais'** tour, you'll uncover a wealth of knowledge about (often slightly hidden) wine domains in Paris and the world of natural wines.

Geoffrey is truly passionate about sustainable farming and on both tours, he sheds light on the high use of pesticides – often the culprit behind those post-wine headaches – rather than the presence of sulfites. He's an authentic expert and has even contributed to several wine books. Along the way, glasses and a bottle of wine magically emerge from a bag, and there are also stops for tastings, naturally accompanied by delectable French cheeses. A true gem of an experience!

More info: <u>www.paris-wine-walks.com</u>

Green River Cruises: Intimacy on the Seine

Green River Cruises offers enchanting boat excursions on the Seine. What sets this company apart is their boats, designed for 12 passengers, making them more intimate and cozy compared to most other cruise lines. Notably, they are electric and environmentally friendly, catering perfectly to those who yearn to relish the beauty of Paris without leaving a large ecological footprint.

Interestingly, Green River Cruises presents an array of tours, including private jaunts, boat rentals, and their signature boat cruises. The most sought-after voyage is the 90-minute Green River Cruise, which meanders along the Seine, treating you to iconic landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower, the Notre-Dame Cathedral, and the Louvre Museum. Accompanied by knowledgeable guides who provide detailed commentary, the experience is elevated further with a bottle of white wine to enjoy during the journey. It's truly a fantastic way to unravel the treasures of Paris!

More info: <u>www.greenriver-paris.fr</u>

(Even) more info:

Toeristische website van Parijs: <u>www.parisinfo.com</u> Musée du Louvre: <u>www.louvre.fr</u> Musée d'Orsay: <u>www.musee-orsay.fr</u> Opéra Garnier: <u>www.operadeparis.fr</u>

