



## What's Happening In Paris

By Linsey, Ciao Bella Travel's Paris Correspondent

October 08

The first time I visited Paris was in 1998, the year France won the World Cup. I was twelve years old. Frankly, I didn't give two hoots about the football; I was too enthralled with everything else about the city – the fashion, the culture, the romance, the French men (*ooh là là*, indeed!) – that I barely even noticed the bus full of dancing, elated French footballers making its way slowly through the cheering crowds on the Champs Elysée after they won the cup.

I came away from that trip feeling as though I had only had a glimpse of the city. I had been to all the places the Guidebooks had told me to go, I had been enchanted, like the guidebooks said I would be, standing at the top of the Eiffel tower and looking out across The City of Light. But I wished I'd had a chance to explore the city further, to roam through the hidden streets where the tourists don't go, to see Paris from the point of view of a local. I wished I'd been told that there was a lot more to Paris than the Eiffel Tower, the Notre Dame Cathedral and Monte Martre. And I'd really wished someone had told me *not* to wear dungarees in Paris (you may mock but in my defence I was twelve and it *was* 1998.) In short, I wished someone had told me where to find the hidden gems in the capital, and what I could expect in terms of fashion and culture.

And then, a decade later, I found myself living in Paris, the city that had stolen my heart all those years before. Now I have all the time in the world (well, perhaps not *all* the time in the world as I do, unfortunately, have a day job) to roam the winding Parisian streets, to sip the best coffee in the city and eat buttery croissants on a peaceful café terrace, people-watching. It seems that I am always discovering new restaurants or bars that are nowhere to be found in the tourist guidebooks and that is one of the many things that I love about living here. I finally get to see Paris through the eyes of a local. But where is the fun in that if I don't share my findings with other like-minded people?

One of the best things about writing this article means that I got to spend my weekend in Paris doing 'research'. That means eating the most delicious caramel macaroon I have ever tasted in my *life*, bought from **Pierre Hermé**, the very famous and very talented French pastry chef. If I'm completely honest with you, I actually bought *two* macaroons because that's how

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TRAVEL

seriously I take my research. And wow did those two macaroons blow my mind. I could describe the taste experience a bit like sweet silk melting on my tongue followed by an explosion of deliciousness. Yes, it was definitely worth the 3.90 euro. No doubt about it.



In the sixth arrondissement, you will find the stunningly beautiful **Jardin du Luxembourg**; by far the best park in Paris. It may not be a hidden gem, it's well known, although perhaps it's not at the top of most tourist's lists of things to do while in the city, but this garden is loved by the locals of Paris. Fountains and busts and statues and monuments are everywhere, turning a simple stroll into something much more. I'd go as far as to say it's like a park of art. An Art Park, even. And if you are one of those people who can take your macaroons from Pierre Hermé's patisserie shop and not eat them until you arrive in the park, then Le Jardin du Luxembourg makes the perfect macaroon eating spot. Trust me. (Unfortunately, I couldn't wait and scooped both of mine in record time, right outside the Pierre Hermé shop, which is rather shameful and I can only hope that Monsieur Hermé himself was not watching me. But had I possessed enough willpower to wait until I got to a suitable macaroon-eating spot, Le Jardin du Luxembourg would have been my chosen place.)

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In the name of research, of course, I planned a night out in the city for this weekend, convincing my boyfriend to come along with me. “But it’s for my article!” I said when he protested, and despite the fact that we are both poor as poppers at the moment, he sighed and said “well, if it’s for research...”

But wait! A girl can’t go on a night out in the city just like that! No, she needs new clothes, and new shoes, and maybe even a new handbag! So after my embarrassing macaroon scoffing, I wiped the caramel from my mouth and skipped off in the direction of the metro in order to get to **Havre – Caumartin** in the 9th arrondissement where you will find a collection of gorgeous, stylish shops favoured by the Parisian women on the **Boulevard Haussmann** (which, if you are going to be in Paris at Christmas time, is a must-see; the spectacular lights and enticing window displays always take my breath away). Once there, I spent several hours boring my boyfriend out of his mind in **Galleries Lafayette** and **Printemps** – my favourite, and in my opinion, two of the best high street shops in France – strolling from one end of the shop to the other, browsing through the long dressy coats (very big right now), designer straight-legged jeans (also very big right now) and t-shirts. After a lengthy bout of humming and hawing, Himself told me that if I was buying something, it was now or never and so I left with a deliciously gorgeous long, cream cardigan to wear with jeans. After all, it’s autumn here now and it can get rather chilly in the mornings and evenings, so a knee-length cardigan was what my mother might call a ‘sensible choice’.

Next stop was to buy a pair of boots. Knee length boots are hot this season in Paris, which is great for me, because they hide my strangely skinny ankles (nothing else about me is skinny; my ankles are like toothpicks. Why could I not get skinny arms or skinny thighs? Why my ankles? What use are skinny ankles?). I’ve been seeing knee length boots over jeans or with a skirt – mini or mid-length – everywhere recently and I decided it was about time I bought a pair for myself. With Paris being the fashion capital of the world, it seems right that I try to keep my wardrobe up to date. So new boots it was.

Ciao Bella Travel Pty Ltd  
ACN 095 428 943

Suite 5, 65 Macgregor Terrace, Bardon, 4065  
Queensland, Australia  
info@ciaobellatravel.com.au  
M: + 61 7 3368 3112

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I've said it before and I will say it again. Shoes in France cost a bomb. They are, apparently, made to last ten years. Ten years? Ten years?! Who wants to wear the same pair of shoes for ten years? No shoe stays in fashion for a decade! Alas I left the shop with a lovely pair of brown leather boots but feeling rather guilty at the abuse my poor credit card just suffered.

But it didn't matter! Because that night I went out in Paris, hand in hand with my man, feeling like a sexy Parisienne in my new cardigan over a plain white t-shirt, and jeans tucked into my brand new boots. I mean, feeling that way is priceless, isn't it?

My day of 'research' finished up at a bar back in the 5th arrondissement drinking vodka and orange (that was me) and beer (that was him) and listening to a live jazz band. The bar, named **Caveau de la Huchette**, is a jazz club bar (admittedly a tad expensive, but quite worth it) and often has live music in the evenings. Inside, the bar is a series of caves, which was quite freaky at first – something about caves makes me think of bats and spiders – but the melange of alcohol and jazz loosened me up.



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Now, I'm not the biggest fan of jazz, I don't *dislike* it but I'm not in love with it either. However, I *do* love live music and I ended up really rather enjoying myself, so much so that I got up and joined the other girls who were dancing on the teensy-weensy dance floor. Maybe it was the vodka, maybe it was the jazz, maybe it was the boots, but I was having a grand time.

Until I danced toward my boyfriend in what was supposed to be a seductive manner and yelled over the music, "Don't you just *love* my new boots?"

"No." He yelled back. "They're brown."

I've decided that the next time I'm doing my 'research', he won't be invited.

## Addresses

### **Pierre Hermé Patisserie**

72 Rue Bonaparte  
6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement  
Paris  
(Closest Metro: Odeon / Saint Michel.)

### **Jardin du Luxembourg**

Rue de Vaugirard Paris  
6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement  
Paris  
(Closest RER: RER B Luxembourg)

### **Galleries Lafayette, Printemps and other *fabulous* shops**

Boulevard Haussmann  
9<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement  
Paris  
(Closest Metro: Havre Caumartin)

### **Caveau de la Huchette**

5 Rue de la Huchette  
5<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement  
Paris  
(Closest RER: RER B or RER C St-Michel – Notre Dame)

*Photos from and with thanks to [Pierreherme.com](http://Pierreherme.com), [Francebalade.com](http://Francebalade.com) and [Paris-on-line.com](http://Paris-on-line.com)*