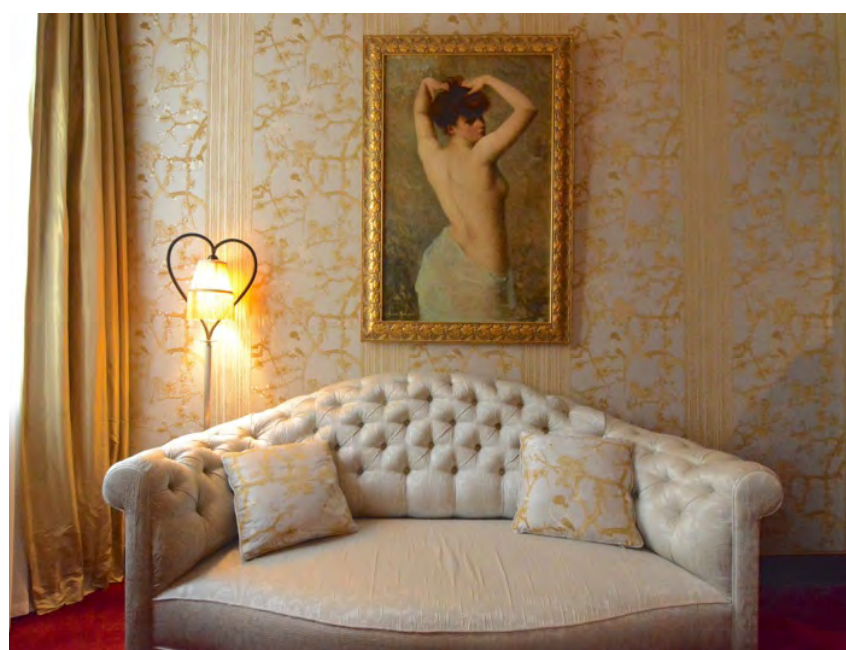


Leah Travels France October

By Leah Walker





Each month, our Editor-at-Large and Paris resident, Leah Walker, is opening her French address book. She'll share the latest, greatest, little known, classic and up-and-coming finds in her adopted home country. Find more travel tidbits on her website, LeahTravels.com and get your daily French dose from her Instagram, [LeahTravels](https://www.instagram.com/LeahTravels). Visit this Museum

With nearly 1,200 works from artists such as Andy Warhol, Alain Jacquet, David Tremlett and Cesar Arman, the Museum of Modern Art and Contemporary Art (MAMAC) is a must-visit when in Nice.

Documenting art from the 1960s until today, the MAMAC is nearly 50,000 square feet of avant-garde works from Europe and the USA. The building is just as impressive as the art inside. Greeting visitors are massive sculptures on the esplanade Niki de Saint Phalle by artists like Alexander Calder and Bernar Venet. And with glass passageways connecting the four square towers, don't miss going to one of the rooftop terraces for an excellent view over Nice. Admission is €10 and is closed on Mondays. Museum of Modern Art and Contemporary Art, Place Yves Klein, 06364 Nice

Check In

Opened in March of 2015, Maison Souquets is a five-star boutique hotel in Paris's up-and-coming area of South Pigalle (SoPi). A former brothel, the hotel was once run by Madame Souquet during the early 1900s. The neighborhood south of Montmartre and near the Moulin Rouge is still a bit rough around the edges, with plenty of massage parlors and adult shops, but the gentrification is evident with its trendy bars and restaurants. In keeping with the spirit of the area and the building's past, famed French designer, Jacques Garcia, melded his signature baroque style using antiques from the 18th century to create a modern, French classic. As part of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, Maison Souquets feels like a home rather than a hotel.

The lobby mimics a living room, while the adjoining bar has an old-school library look, with its rich wood, plush fabrics and cozy corners. Breakfast is served in the bright, mirror-filled Winter Garden, with a small outdoor space that can be used by smokers. In the basement, there is a large pool (by Paris standards), a steam room and massage room, which can be booked 24-hours a day. The entire space can be exclusively reserved by guests



for an hour each day for the utmost privacy.

The fourteen rooms and six junior suites are named for a famous courtesan and uniquely designed. From Napoleon III to Japanese to Art Nouveau, the finest silks, tasseled lamps, handpicked antiques and Hermes toiletries unify the rooms. This petite hotel is absolutely big on style, luxury and character. Maison Souquet, 10 rue de Bruxelles, 75009 Paris

Sample this Specialty

Marseille is synonymous with bouillabaisse, a seafood soup that was originally made by fishermen in France's second city. The original recipe is cause for debate, but Provençal herbs and spices are used to make the broth, while bony local Mediterranean rockfish and sometimes various types of shellfish are the heart of this traditional dish. In many restaurants such as Miramar, the broth is first served with bread and rouille, a sauce made from olive oil, garlic breadcrumbs, saffron and chili peppers. The fish is then brought out on a large platter, deboned table side and placed into

the broth-filled bowls. It's as much about presentation as the taste, and a trip to Marseille is incomplete without sampling bouillabaisse. Restaurant Miramar, 12 Quai du Port, 13002 Marseille

Take this Tour

It was in 1715 that Englishman, Jean Martell, left his home in Jersey to begin trading eaux-de-vie in Cognac. This year, Martell Cognac celebrates its 300th anniversary. Lovers and those curious about Cognac are invited to take Martell's hour-long tour. While exploring the grounds of the oldest of the great Cognac houses, visitors will not only learn the origins of Martell by touring Jean Martell's modest, limestone home, but also historical storehouses. Through a series of exhibits, the tour takes guests from the grape to the glass. Displays of vines and soil samples from the different crus make the words of the expert guide come to life, while a room showcasing the barrel-making process rounds out the Cognac education. Centuries of Martell Cognac bottles and hand-written ledgers are on display and represent the evolution of the brand. For those over the age of eighteen, a tasting is available in Martell's shop to complete the tour. Martell & Co, 7 Place Edouard Martell, 16100 Cognac

Fine Dining

It's a family affair at the two-star Michelin rated Albert 1er in Chamonix. Spanning five generations, current head chef, Pierre Maillet, took over the restaurant from his father-in-law, Pierre Carrier.

The unfussy and natural menu is not only influenced by the surrounding Mont-Blanc and nearby Piedmont region of Italy, but also Chef Maillet's childhood in Toulouse and his work in restaurants along the Mediterranean. Dishes are ever changing to reflect the freshest ingredients available, but the cheese trolley filled with special hard and soft cheeses from France and Italy, as well as a decadent dessert trolley, are ever-present. Look to head sommelier, Alain Gousse, for advice on the nearly 20,000 bottles of wine available in the cellar. Albert 1er, 38 route du Bouchet, 74400 Chamonix Mont Blanc

Drink Up

Just off of Avenue des Ternes in Paris's 17th arrondissement is one of the best cocktail bars in the city. L'Ambre Bar is an unassuming place

that just serves really good drinks. Prior to opening the bar, owners, Anthony and Kevin, worked at the historical Hotel De Crillion before it closed for renovations. At L'Ambre, handcrafted cocktails are made with the freshest ingredients, while the selection of spirits is inspiring for a bar of its size. L'Ambre has a neighborhood feel, where regulars are called by name and first-timers are greeted just as warmly. Live music can often be heard in the evening and a limited tapas menu is available. L'Ambre, 29 rue Brunel, 75017 Paris

Chat with a Concierge

I sat down with Yannick Bastoni, the Chief Concierge at Hôtel Fouquet's Barrière in Paris, for insight on some of his favorite things from the City of Light.

Leah Walker: What restaurant would you choose for a special dinner?

Yannick Bastoni: I love to start with a drink at Hôtel Costes. After, I'll eat Japanese at Kinugawa in the 1st arrondissement, just around the back of Hôtel Le Meurice on Rue du Mont Thabor. Another place for dinner would be at Monsieur Bleu, a restaurant inside Palais Tokyo. It has a terrace overlooking the Eiffel Tower, and in the summer, they use the terrace for aperitifs and live music from 7 p.m. After drinks, go inside for dinner. I'm sure you can find better food in the trendier restaurants, but the atmosphere, ambiance and people there is funnier than maybe in a proper French restaurant. Hôtel Costes, 239-241 Rue Saint-Honoré, 75001 Paris; Kinugawa, 9 Rue du Mont Thabor, 75001 Paris; Monsieur Bleu, 20 Avenue de New York, 75116 Paris

LW: What is an ideal Saturday in Paris for you?

YB: I get out of Paris. I'm from Cannes in the South of France, so I'm used to Nature. I play golf and am a member of the Paris International Golf Club, which is the only course designed by Jack Nicklaus in France. There's a swimming pool, so I'd spend the day with my children. It's about 35 kilometers from Paris and guests can pay to play with a member. However, the public can visit the restaurant. The chef once worked for Alain Ducasse, so it's a nice place to go for lunch. Paris International Golf Club, 18 Route du Golf, 95560 Baillet-en-France

LW: What classic Parisian experience never goes out of



style, even for Parisians?

YB: When my family comes to Paris, we always end up going to the same places. On Sunday afternoon, we go to the Marais. It's definitely a thing tourists like to do. It's really the only place that shops are open on Sundays. But, everyone goes there, even locals. It's fun, lively, has great shops and beautiful architecture. I just love the area. This is something that I enjoy doing, maybe not every Sunday, but every now and again, for sure. Le Marais, 3rd and 4th arrondissements

LW: What is your favorite café in the city?

YB: My favorite café isn't one in particular, but it is a traditional French brasserie. The decorations and architecture must be traditional. I like places that have been there for years. I really just love having an orange juice, coffee

and croissant while reading the newspaper in any of these types of places. I particularly like those in the 17th near Place des Ternes or Parc Monceau, such as Le Courcelles. Le Courcelles, 92 Boulevard de Courcelles, 75017 Paris

LW: What's trendy in Paris now?

YB: It's trendy to be fit, but even French people are starting to look at what they have on their plates—gluten-free and that sort of stuff is getting more popular. It's a really special thing for us to go have a nice lunch or dinner. It's a great notion of pleasure and sharing when we eat. Even though I've been brought up like this, I've always looked after myself and checked what I put in my stomach. Now, we are understanding more and more what we are eating, and that's something pretty new for the French.