

Paris of the Future
 Fish La Boissonnerie
 Dancing with a Star
 Jardin d'Agronomie Tropical
 Claude Nature
 State of the Tart

APRIL 2009

Euro March 24: .743
 Euro Feb 23: .788
 Rain Days: 14
 High Temp: 60°F/16°C
 Low Temp: 43°F/6°C
 Nat'l Holidays: April 12, 13

PARIS

n o t e s

VOLUME 18 ISSUE 3

CLEAN AND GREEN?

By Amanda MacKenzie

Wherever you are in Paris, it's hard not to be reminded of the City's newly awakened eco-awareness

It is one of those trivial incidents that seems to sum it all up. One instant, I'm striding out to claim my bike from a Vélib' park in a smart, downtown area of Paris. The next, I am gliding along the sidewalk as my left foot forms a vacuum seal with the unspeakable. And there we have it. This is the city that would like its air to be as sparkling as its buildings, the city that has "greened" its reputation with a brave and democratic bike-rental scheme. It's also the city where you tread carefully, mindfully—until, that is, you forget and slip up in a pile of dog mess. "Lucky for some," offers a passerby. Not in my book, it isn't.

Cleanness and greenness; say them in the same breath, and you risk trivializing the battle to save the planet. Yet Paris has big aspirations on both fronts and, as a latecomer to the party, the City is working hard to make up for lost time. You can hardly turn without some reminder of the city's newly awakened eco-awareness. Yesterday's local park is today's "espace verte écologique." Today's good recycling practice is marketed with the promise that there'll be a tomorrow. Last October, the Conseil de Paris adopted a climate plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent (as compared to 2004 levels) by 2020. That target goes beyond European Union carbon-cutting requirements. The city has nailed its colors to the mast, and they look distinctly green.

That shouldn't come as a surprise, given that the force behind the Plan Climat is none other than Green Party member Denis Baupin. Until recently, Baupin was in charge of the city's transport portfolio, where his success at making life awkward for Parisian motorists earned him the nickname of Monsieur Embouteillages (as well as one or two more caustic titles). Baupin does not really care for cars, and with some justification. With and without his restrictions in place, they clog up the city's arteries and pollute the air. Transport as a whole is responsible for putting the equivalent of 13.2 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere

every year, over half the city's total output. True, cars are only partly responsible (the figure also reflects aviation and freight transport), but when it comes to carbon cutting, they are a pretty obvious place to start.

So how about a Congestion Charge, along the lines of the one embraced in London? Paris has rejected this idea on the grounds that it



merely favors the rich, who can afford to pay and be damned. Rather, the Mairie (City Hall) favors "circulations douces" (the exclusion or restriction of vehicles in certain quartiers and at certain times) as part of a wider package of initiatives. The most conspicuous of these is Vélib'. Underpinned by a growing network of cycle paths, the low-cost bike-sharing scheme has been successful on several fronts. It has achieved what many thought impossible: making the city feel navigable and at least moderately safe to cycle. It is genuinely popular, clocking up over 41 million rentals since its introduction. And it has attracted interest from mayors in San Francisco, Singapore and London, all of whom are planning projects of their own. Sadly, even with current preparations to extend Vélib' into certain suburbs, the scheme is beset with problems of "incivisme" ("uncivic" behavior). Half of the original fleet of bikes has been stolen or trashed, says the commercial partner of Vélib', JCDecaux, prompting the

City to pick up part of the bill for new bikes.

Thanks to Vélib', Parisian drivers are getting used to the idea of not having the highway all to themselves. It would be naïve, though, to expect the bike service to entice many of them out of their cars. For that, you need to look to the Tramway des Maréchaux, or T3, opened in 2006 along the city's southwest border. Along with lower emissions, T3's eco-credentials include greenery where there was none and sidewalks made from recycled materials. Energy-efficient lighting is used along the route, saving the equivalent of a year's lighting for a small town. Predictions of a 25 percent cut in car traffic are unconfirmed, but there's no quibbling with the passenger numbers—around 100,000 people use it every weekday. Work on an eastern extension of T3, which will eventually run as far as the Porte de la Chapelle, is due to begin next year. If it is delivered on deadline in 2012, it will be a fine example of inter-government cooperation—and will further marginalize Parisian petrol-heads.

Other parts of the transport strategy seem less cooperative. Next year will see the launch of Autolib', a scheme enabling drivers to pick up and drop off small electric cars from points on either side of the Périphérique. With the projected fleet recently doubled to 4,000 vehicles, it looks likely to be another international PR coup, the first self-service electric car rental scheme to be adopted by a capital city. Carbon-neutral cars should be a green no-brainer, yet for all their long-term merits, the scheme may not necessarily be a quick fix. Autolib' will be competing with Baupin's existing car club scheme, currently under expansion. Won't this consolidate car use rather than reduce it? And who exactly will Autolib' appeal to? One thing's certain: Armed with its Vélib' experience, the Mairie should have ample strategies to stop the cars from being dumped in the canal or wrapped around trees.

If only everything could be as simple as recycling, the Paris (continued on page 7)

é Sometimes, going to yet another museum can be monotonous. You've walked and explored until you have holes in your shoes. You have too much energy to sit for hours in a café. All the parks you have visited are starting to look the same. Yes, even in Paris you can get bored at times. I have a suggestion for those days. Go "manisurfing."

The French word for demonstration, as in protest, is "manifestation" ("manif" for short), and Paris must certainly be the world capital of manifs. To surf around for some manifs, pick up a copy of *Le Parisien* (€1) at your local kiosk, take out the "Le Journal de Paris" insert and look on the back page. There, you'll find a section called "Pour Bien Circuler," a map of Paris with markers for that day's road closings, areas where roadwork is being done—and manifestations. It's kind of like a manifestation manifest. During one week in March, I counted around 15 manifestations taking place all over the city.

You could, for example, join a manifestation of students calling for more government spending on schools; homeless people asking for tent villages; Congolese rights activists; cannabis smokers demanding legalization; wheat growers hoping for higher tariffs; Argentinian human-rights fighters; those seeking Kurdish independence; and boisterous members of the DGCCRF, whatever that is. And, if you're lucky, one day there will be the big daddy for the manisurfer: the "manif intersyndicale." Multiple-union manifs can attract tens of thousands; the excitement and energy are often palpable.

Manisurfing is a great way to mingle with the locals. The loud shouting is therapeutic and improves your French. And, hey, you'll have a rare chance to truly be French for a day.

—Mark Eversman, Editor
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Reader Question of the Month

When you go to Paris, do you prefer staying in a hotel or renting an apartment?

Each month we ask readers a question about various Paris topics. We'd be interested in what you have to say. Send an e-mail to the editor.

Paris telephone numbers starting with (1) require a (01) when you dial from within France.

ré d a c t i o n

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Paris of the Future

In September 2007, President Sarkozy announced a "consultation internationale," for which 10 world-class architects/urbanists would be selected to imagine a Paris of the future (30 years out). In June 2008, the architects, including Jean Nouvel, Christian de Portzamparc, Winny Maas, Richard Rogers and Yves Lion, were selected for what's been pet-named Grand Paris. The architects were given six months to prepare their concepts; the sky, they were told, was the limit. In March, the architects presented their concepts to a "committee of experts," and press kits were distributed. In May, an exhibition that will run until November will open to the public at the Cité de l'Architecture. The drawings and graphics of what the architects came up with depict urban scenarios that are as varied as they are—well, grand, and in some cases grandiose. For all the architects, Grand Paris spreads out far beyond its current perimeter, even as far as the Channel coast. Sprawling Central Park-like parks dot the landscape and are interconnected by Disneyesque, zero-emission transportation systems; skyscraper zones are accented with opera houses and cultural venues.

Honoring Women

No doubt, women in Paris get shortchanged when it comes to commemorative plaques, streets named after them and public-venue dedications. For example, of Paris' 6,240 streets, only about three to four percent are named after women. There is a lot of catching up to do, but the City is making a noble effort to reverse its past bias. This task is being led by Fatima Lelem, a mayoral assistant who holds an unusual title: Adjoint du Maire de Paris Chargée de l'Égalité Homme-Femme. Progress is being made: Between 2001 and 2007, 53 out of 171 new street names were named after women. On the short list for dedications: Ella Fitzgerald and Françoise Sagan.

Michelin 2009

Despite growing debate over the value—or fairness—of the Michelin rating system, Michelin is still a force in Paris, and fortunes and reputations are still made and destroyed by the giving or taking of its stars. Judging from the 2009 guide, released in March, Paris restaurants are either getting better or the Michelin rating system is getting easier, as more stars were added than taken away. There are now 10 three-stars (up one from 2008), 14 two-stars and 41 one-stars (up three from 2008). The most talked about star this year was the third star awarded to Le Bristol's Eric Fréchon (age 45), a well-liked, hard-working

chef. Fréchon has been at Le Bristol for 10 years and is known for his consistency and creativity with "produits du terroir." Here is the complete list of Paris' three-stars, at which you will have the privilege of spending about €200-250 per person, wine not included: Le Plaza Athénée, L'Ambroisie (the oldest, with three stars since 1988), Arpège, Astrance, Le Bristol, Guy Savoy, Ledoyen, Le Meurice, Pierre Gagnaire and Le Pré-Catelan.

The New Grocers

A wave of new-generation stores is sweeping over Paris. Billed as "les nouveaux épiciers" (the new grocers), these stores are more or less boutique versions of large-company chain stores. The boutiques for each company share attractive facades but their offerings vary from neighborhood to neighborhood, according to what local residents want—or will buy. Their atmospheres are modern, warm and inviting (lots of darker, neutral colors), and their prices are surprisingly reasonable. Take a coffee at the small bar, buy and quietly read your paper or magazine, pick up a tomato-and-mozzarella salad and a nice bottle of wine for dinner, and get a chipper "Merci" and "Au revoir" as you leave. This concept might not be unique in other cities, but for Paris, it's a bit surprising—one gets the rare impression that the customer is king or queen. Giant Monoprix first got into the mix with its Monop' shops; it's opened 25 of them and has another 30 planned. Monoprix's big-box competitors have begun to open their first shops, which have names like Carrefour City, Simply City and Chez Jean.

Cabaret Cutbacks

The show must go on, they say, but the world economic crisis is making the future uncertain for Paris' celebrated cabarets. Numerous small cabarets dot Paris, but there are five big-production shows. At the top of the heap are the internationally famous Lido (www.lido.fr) and Moulin Rouge (www.moulinrouge.fr). In a category of its own for its more sexual explicitness is the Crazy Horse (www.lecrazyhorseparis.com). The Bobin'O (www.bobino.fr) and the Paradis Latin (www.paradislain.fr) fill out a second tier. All five shows are struggling to stay afloat. The Bobin'O recently closed for six months to take a breather and redo its show. The Lido's attendance numbers are reported to be down ten percent. Several shows are reducing the number of weekly performances, as well as toning down or eliminating the more expensive parts of their productions. The least affected is the Moulin Rouge, which is still drafting off the 2001 "Moulin Rouge!" movie. The good news is, if you shop around the Internet, excellent ticket deals can now be had.

• PARIS • B I T E S

By Rosa Jackson

We continued our stroll through Saint-Germain, where we encountered full dining rooms everywhere we looked

P
B You wouldn't think that a recently opened restaurant claiming to serve the priciest pizzas in Paris would be thriving during the global financial crisis. Yet when my friend L. and I wandered over to Pizza Chic at 8pm on a Tuesday night, thinking we could easily get a table, we were told that the restaurant was booked up for the entire night. Admittedly the dining room is small—but still, the entire night? This is a place that charges €14 for a pizza slathered with Nutella, when around the corner in Montparnasse, Nutella crêpes go for around €4.

We continued our stroll through Saint-Germain, where we encountered full dining rooms everywhere we looked. Clearly, the flailing economy is not hitting Paris in the same way as in other world capitals, where chefs are going to great lengths to reel in customers. Apparently, restaurant-going is down by 10 to 15 percent in France compared to 25 percent in Britain or the United States. It could be that the recession hasn't (yet) hit quite as hard in France as elsewhere, but I suspect that restaurants are one of the last pleasures Parisians would be willing to give up.

So it seemed at the Saint-Germain bistro **Fish**, where we were finally lucky enough to find a table that night. This former poissonnerie (fish shop), which the owners have dubbed a "boissonnerie" (drinking place) in reference to the many wines served here, is a favorite of English speakers who live in this neighborhood. English slightly dominated the babble of voices as we entered the wood-beamed dining room with a bar at the front. The dinner menu isn't exactly cheap at €31.50 for two courses or €36.50 for three, with price supplements of €2-€5 here and there, but it's generally considered a bargain for this very expensive area. The New Zealand-born owners also run the wine shop La Dernière Goutte around the corner, so as you might expect there is a selection of well-priced wines by the glass or bottle.

The set menu makes a tempting read, with five or six choices for each course, several of them involving fish or seafood even if this is not officially a fish restaurant. L. ordered the only vegetarian dish, mesclun salad with slightly crisp slices of pear, marinated onions and a mustard-and-honey dressing. The ingredients had obviously been well chosen and the nicely balanced dressing made this the kind of salad you remember weeks later.

Predictably, I chose a more calorific starter of breaded and fried strips of perch with ravigote sauce and salad. Slightly reminiscent of fish 'n chips (without the chips), it came with a variation on the very caper-y sauce that normally accompanies tête de veau, a jellied terrine made with bits and pieces of the calf's head. The quantity was just right: enough to feel satisfied, but not enough to kill my appetite for the next course.

To follow, L. went for the heartier dish of pork tenderloin with a vivid green parsley risotto, a head of roasted garlic and a decorative parmesan tuile. The juicy pork was pink in the center, which is desirable in this cut of meat, which can easily turn dry. The risotto got the nod of approval from L., who knows her Italian food, though I thought it could have been seasoned a little more. Then again, my dish of scallops with caramelized endives, crispy fried slivers of leek and a delicious cream sauce was quite salty, not that I was complaining. Wisely, the scallops had not been overcooked either and I savored every delicate-tasting bite (sweet scallops and bitter endives is a combination I can't resist).

Recession oblige, we skipped dessert and had only one glass of wine, a likeable Mâcon Fuissé chardonnay, but for €5 more we might have had a choice of three ripe cheeses, a lemon and orange tart or perhaps warm rice pudding with berry sauce. As the owner made the rounds to chat with the regular customers, I could understand why Fish continues to be so popular. At lunch there is a €12.50 prix fixe consisting of a salad followed by a pasta dish, and it's open all afternoon on Saturdays for snacks and wine.

Further evidence of the recession-proof nature of Paris bistros can be found up in Montmartre, where **Le Miroir** has been thriving since it opened last year. The dining room looks a little anonymous at the front, but farther back there is a bar and beyond that a glass ceiling that lets in plenty of natural light. In neo-bistro tradition, the menu is hand-written on a chalkboard. The young chef trained with Ducasse and it shows in the sophisticated simplicity of the dishes on the €32 menu-carte, which allows you to order according to your appetite.

Our meal began promisingly with a basket of bread speckled with red pepper, which proved difficult to stop eating. My meat-loving friend S. started his meal with the charcuterie platter that has become a fixture

in many otherwise modern bistros, while I chose a more unusual salad of bulots (sea snails) and lingots, white beans. Though it looked a little restrained compared to other charcuterie platters I've seen, this one got extra points for its terrine of deboned pig's trotter, which S. gobbled up happily along with the accompanying onion jam. I was just as content with my salad, whose ingredients work surprisingly well together, united by a tangy vinaigrette and decorated with purple endive leaves.

To follow, I had a Ducasse-like dish of thick turbot filet with Mediterranean vegetables that retained just enough of their crunch. Turbot is a rare sight in a bistro, and here its freshness could not be faulted. There was a bit of a glitch in the service when the waiter brought veal with mashed potato and girolle mushrooms instead of the duck with girolles that S. had ordered; we spotted the mistake only after the first couple of bites and the waiter insisted on whisking the plate away despite S.'s protests that it didn't matter. When the duck arrived sans mashed potato he looked almost forlorn, but the crisp-skinned meat made up for it.

For dessert, the petit pot de crème vanille was standard neo-bistro fare—i.e., delicious—while the chocolate financiers that came with it were exceptionally good. S. made an equally good choice with the plate of Beaufort, a Swiss-like cheese from the Franche-Comté region; a little pot of spicy ratatouille was a nice touch. He has been back a couple of times since and tells me that the standard is just as high, though he finds the wine list a bit limited. Since it lists one of my favorite producers, Gramenon from the Rhône, I can't say that I noticed. A meal in a crowded bistro with a couple of glasses of his blackcurrant-like red is enough to make me forget the world's economic woes, at least for one night.

•Fish La Boissonnerie: 69 Rue de Seine, 6th. Tel: 1-43-54-34-69.

•Le Miroir: 94 Rue des Martyrs, 18th. Tel: 1-46-06-50-73.

Paris Fact: In 2008, visits to the 14 Paris museums that are owned by the City reached a record 2,981,000.

Paris Fact: In December 2008, a park in the 17th arrondissement was named after Martin Luther King, Jr.

DANCING WITH A STAR

Stellar success and terrible tragedy awaited Isadora Duncan in Paris

What a life! And what a death. Many know of Isadora Duncan's dramatic death: She was strangled by one of her long, fringed scarves when it caught in the wheel of her car. But fewer know much about her remarkable life, and her pioneering role in modern dance. And still fewer realize that this American-born dancer, who traveled and toured the world, was based for the major part of her adult life in Paris.

Born in 1877 in San Francisco, Isadora (a family name) grew up in a bohemian atmosphere and was raised by a mother who single-handedly attempted to support her four children as a piano teacher. The father, an adventurer who made and lost several fortunes, was largely absent. The mother often could not feed her brood, but she regularly surrounded them with classical music. From an early age, young Isadora found herself trying to express this music through dance—not in the stilted and formulaic steps of the ballet of her time, but through something entirely new and daring. Her dancing, influenced by her impressions of nature and of classical Greece, was smooth, flowing and entirely natural, unencumbered by tricks and poses or even by the restrictive tutu and toe shoes. Instead, she adopted free-flowing tunics and sandals (later, she danced barefoot), which shocked her earliest audiences but allowed her the freedom to move as she wanted.

More than anything, she wanted to express the essence of this beautiful music through the “lost art of dancing,” and she wanted to express it to as many people as possible. But it would be a long, difficult journey before she would have the opportunity to do so. Traveling with her close-knit family to Chicago and then to New York, she endured hardship and innumerable humiliations, including a stint in vaudeville. But she steadfastly held to her vision, and developed a small but growing group of supporters.

At last, she found her audience in Paris. After giving private performances to enthusiastic and exclusive groups of Parisian artists and socialites, she toured extensively throughout Europe and America, returning to live permanently in Paris in 1909. By this time, she was a celebrity and had founded a school of the dance in Germany, which she entrusted her sister to supervise. She also had given birth to an illegitimate but well-loved child, a daughter named Deirdre.

In Paris, Isadora rented two apartments in the attractive Left-Bank building at 5 Rue Danton, 6th—one for herself and Deirdre, and the other for the female students she had

brought with her from her German school, which had disbanded for lack of funds. She also rented a studio in the beautiful old Hôtel Biron (77 Rue de Varenne, 7th), now the Musée Rodin, which in her day accommodated a bevy of artists, including Rodin, Matisse and Jean Cocteau. Accompanied by her students, she proceeded to dazzle Paris with a series of performances at the Théâtre Gaité-Lyrique in Montparnasse (which is still functioning as the Théâtre Gaité-Montparnasse, at 26 Rue de la Gaité, 14th), selling out every seat in the theater for the entire run. She was the toast of the town.

It was now that she met Paris Singer, the wealthy son of Isaac Merritt Singer, of Singer sewing machine fame. (Paris Singer was also the



brother of Princesse Edmond de Polignac, née Winnaretta Singer, who had launched Isadora in Parisian artistic circles several years earlier.) Like his sister, Paris Singer was a patron of the arts, but the focus of his patronage quickly became Isadora, who spent lavishly and was forever in need of money. She enjoyed Singer's millions but had no intention of marrying him—for years she had vigorously expressed her opposition to marriage as an institution. Yet she was not opposed to bearing Singer's child, an illegitimate son named Patrick, whom she adored.

By this time Isadora had moved to a lovely studio in Neuilly, near the Seine (at 68 Rue Chauveau-Lagarde, now replaced by an apartment building). While she worked and toured, she installed the children and their governess in Versailles, from where they regularly visited. One rainy day in April 1913, shortly after she kissed them good-bye, their chauffeured car stalled at the end of the block. When the chauffeur cranked the engine, the car bolted across Boulevard Bourdon and down the steep embankment into the Seine. Both children and their governess drowned before help could arrive.

Isadora was devastated. She piled mountains

of flowers around their little bodies, whose cremated remains now lie in the upper level of Père-Lachaise's columbarium, marked only by their first names (Deirdre in 6793 and Patrick in 6805). She herself would join them in 1927, in nearby 6796, but it can be argued that in a fundamental way she died with her children. Certainly she never completely recovered from their deaths, and she increasingly sought relief from depression in promiscuity, alcohol and unending parties.

Singer tried to help by giving her the Hôtel Paillard in Bellevue, to use for her school of the dance. But with the outbreak of World War I and the death (only hours after birth) of yet another child, she gave up on the school and allowed Bellevue to be used as a military hospital. Partially destroyed during the war, Bellevue eventually became government property, a center for scientific and military research.

Two years after Deirdre and Patrick's deaths, Isadora gave her first public performance in Paris, at the Trocadéro. Her dancing, now a dramatic upwelling of fervor and anguish, moved the capacity audience to tears. Over the years, she had frequently performed at the Trocadéro and the Théâtre du Châtelet. She also performed at the new Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, where the sculptor Antoine Bourdelle immortalized her in a bas-relief on the facade, pairing her (as never happened in real life) with Nijinsky. For stunning versions of this and other bas-reliefs (shown) in the series, don't miss the Musée Bourdelle, 18 Rue Antoine-Bourdelle, 15th.

After selling Bellevue, Isadora moved to a charming townhouse at 103 Rue de la Pompe, in Passy (it's still there, though marred by a store in front). More tours followed, most notably of Russia, where she was persuaded to come and found a school of the dance. The school foundered, but Isadora stuck it out for almost three difficult years, during which she met and—astonishingly—married the handsome and dissolute young poet Sergei Esenin, who was almost 20 years her junior. Eventually, after incessant destructive (and self-destructive) rampages, this “wild child” killed himself—leaving a kind of Jim Morrison legend in his wake.

Isadora's remaining years were not good ones. Old age was creeping up, along with fat and decay. Always broke, she burned through money as fast as friends could lend it to her. And although she continued to party wildly, she frequently talked of death.

Nevertheless her death, when it came—in Nice—was a shock. Thousands of mourners awaited her casket in Paris, at Père-Lachaise, while a crowd of friends and family jammed the crematorium's chapel, where her earthly remains returned to ashes. Appropriately, and poignantly, the service was accompanied by beautiful music—music that Isadora Duncan had loved so well.

—By Mary McAuliffe

Jardin d'Agronomie Tropical

By Amanda MacKenzie

You can tell she is an Oriental babe, even though her neck now ends just above her necklace of pearls. Reclining on her bed of leaves, her shapely form sets the tone for a park so secret that I almost hesitate to tell you about it. Over the decades, the old Jardin Colonial has been neglected, vandalized and closed to the public. Three years ago, it re-opened under its unwieldy new name. Call it what you will; it's a sleepy park, overlooked and overgrown. For romantics, that only adds to the charm.

On the northeastern edge of the Bois de Vincennes, the park started life in 1899, when exotic plants were first grown here to stock France's foreign colonies. Tea, coffee, bananas and rubber flourished in the greenhouses, some of them still standing, though only just. But the park took its present form for the 1907 Exposition Coloniale, a fashionable showcase of the nation's foreign dominion. Imagine a microcosm of empire, with African and Asian "villages" and lashings of pastiche. During its six-month run, two million visitors flocked through the gates. The runaway hit was the Tuareg encampment, where camel-riding "rebels" staged raids on the indomitable French mail. Elsewhere, real Madagascans, Cambodians and Sudanese added local color. Today, we'd cringe at such a human zoo. Yet, in its day, and to working-class Parisians, it must have seemed like a ticket to a distant world, the choicest parts of which were gloriously French.

Don't look for coffee bushes; they went long ago, to be replaced by hazel, sycamore and ivy. Pause as you enter to admire the much-vandalized ensemble of statues, among them my headless Asian beauty. A graceful figure in a sampan hat stoops under the weight of his basket. A French cockerel looks less than doodle-do now that he's lost his legs. As you stroll the lanes, it's a treat to discover the crumbling buildings in the clearing between trees. The Tunisian pavilion, off limits and shabby, was once a

bustling bazaar of olives, silks and spices. Handsome in hardwood, the Kiosque de Réunion has mercifully escaped arson, unlike its Congo counterpart. An ancient Khmer temple turns out to be a memorial to Laotians and Vietnamese soldiers who fell in French service during World War I, one of several such memorials. Save the Chinese gate for your triumphal exit. Sadly, some of its intricate carved figures have gone AWOL, but it's still magnificent. A fresh coat of red paint would work wonders.



All of which raises a tricky question: Whatever is a modern capital to do with its embarrassing colonial heritage? At the other end of the Bois de Vincennes, the swanky centerpiece of the 1931 Colonial Exhibition has been given a new lease on life as the Cité de l'Immigration. It's a worthy and well-designed museum but still feels mildly as though it's in search of a mission. Critics claim an opportunity has been missed in not incorporating this park into the Cité renovation. Whatever the case, plans seem to have stalled, and maintenance, for now, is low key.

Then again, it's an ill wind. Looking down from the dragon bridge, you may find yourself sharing the view with a heron who's staking out the stream below. Red squirrels and foxes are in residence, and if you tread carefully, you may be lucky enough to see a flash of blue, as a nuthatch scuttles up a tree trunk on the hunt for insects. I know of no place that comes close to this small park when it comes to urban wildlife watching. Nature is busy claiming this colony as its own.

• Jardin d'Agronomie Tropical: 45 bis Ave de la Belle-Gabrielle, Bois de Vincennes, 12th. Open daily, 9:30am to dusk. Take RER line A to Nogent-sur-Marne.

▲ PARIS VISITS ▼

Claude Nature

By Jennifer Ladonne

When it came time, Claude Nature didn't stray too far from Deyrolle, the fabled nature specimens and taxidermy shop on the Rue de Bac (now reopened after a devastating fire in 2008). After working there as an entomologist, ornithologist and taxidermist for 25 years, he left and opened his first eponymous "cabinet de curiosités" near the Sorbonne, and later moved the shop to an airy space on a quiet, leafy stretch of the Boulevard Saint-Germain.

Although Claude Nature and Deyrolle stock many similar items, the shops are very different visually. Where Deyrolle is somewhat dusty and grand, reflecting its 150-year history, Claude Nature is bright, modern and spare, allowing its colorful menagerie to be the main focus. For variety alone, the specimens in this modest space are impressive, ranging from exotic to everyday. Enter Claude Nature and you are surrounded by dozens of animals in stop-motion: A bobcat balances on a tree branch, a gazelle peers nervously into the distance, a peacock in full plumage examines you from on high, a giant tortoise looks as if it might have just ambled in off the beach. Birds of all kinds seem poised to fly or rest on tiny perches: pheasants, a plump pigeon, parrots of every size, miniature songbirds, a heron, a raven.

The boutique comes vividly to life when you're guided by the delightful Hervé, who speaks perfect English and is quick with a charming anecdote. He can tell you the histories of scores of lovely seashells, baleful fishes and intricately reconstructed snake, frog and bird skeletons, priced anywhere from a few euros on up to hundreds. And the insects! Outstanding examples of rare and common butterflies range from dime size to the breadth of a dinner plate. A horned Titanus giganteus, the world's largest beetle, holds a place of honor among other spectacularly sculptural (or downright sinister) bugs. Spiders, delicate maiden flies, leaf mantises

and walking sticks are some of the other pristine specimens on offer.

When asked who shops at Claude Nature, Hervé lists an array of natural history museums and collectors but notes that a good number of his clients are interior decorators—or, simply, imaginative people looking for an unusual gift.

"Why settle for something boring when you can bring your dinner hosts an exotic beetle?" he quips. Done up in a smart black box to offset its brilliant gold carapace, a metallic dung beetle certainly trumps a humdrum bottle of wine. One of Hervé's favorite clients is a nine-year-old boy who visits every two weeks or so, once he's saved up enough pocket money to add yet another of the store's 50 or so crab varieties to his growing collection.

Given that some of Claude Nature's specimens are on the list of protected species, where do they come from? "From zoos," explains Hervé. "We have an agreement that when an animal dies, they call us." For example, concerning a large wallaby with enviable eyelashes, Hervé respectfully recounts: "Oh yes, well, unfortunately a dog found its way into the zoo and gave him a heart attack."

Can everything in the store be legally taken home if you live outside of France? Hervé reassures me: "Obviously, we won't sell you a rare Ornithoptera butterfly or an endangered parrot, but aside from those, everything is perfectly legal to take out of the country." While you may not want to stuff your hand luggage with a Canadian beaver, there are many spectacular, reasonably priced mounted insects, shells or crustaceans in boxes that will fit just fine.

• Claude Nature: 32 Blvd St-Germain, 5th. Tel: 1-44-07-30-79. Site: www.claudenature.com.



STATE OF THE TART

An update on the best pastries in a city known for the best

When I was five years old and spending my first year in Paris, I used to roam the streets with my like-minded father searching for the perfect coffee éclair. Often, we would stop for a *boule de glace* (I loved the deep purple cassis, or blackcurrant); at that time, all the *pâtisseries* made their own ice creams and sorbets. That year, I developed a passion for French pastry. It has never left me and was one reason why I moved to Paris 14 years ago.

Smart cars have replaced Citroën 2CVs in the streets since then, and pastries too have evolved, growing lighter and far more imaginative. The man largely responsible for this was pastry visionary Gaston Lenôtre (site: www.lenotre.fr), who died this January at age 88. He left an empire, run by the Accor Group, that still dishes up some of the finest luxury food in town. As gifted at business as he was at pastry, Lenôtre understood as early as 1957, when he opened his first Paris boutique, that the French were growing weary of heavy cream fillings. He replaced these with airier bavarois and fruit mousses, and introduced cakes such as the aptly named *Succès*, a macaron (almond meringue) base topped with praline cream. It's safe to say that Lenôtre has had an influence on all the successful pastry chefs working in Paris today.

Most notable of these is **Pierre Hermé** (72 Rue Bonaparte, 6th; 185 Rue de Vaugirard, 15th), known among pastry aficionados as the “Picasso of *pâtisserie*.” Hermé began his training with Lenôtre at age 14 before becoming head pastry chef at two Paris institutions, the gourmet deli Fauchon and the tearoom Ladurée. In 2001 he opened his first Paris boutique in Saint-Germain, and there has been a line-up out the door ever since. With this shop, Hermé broke with pastry tradition: the façade is dark gray and austere, looking more like a high-class jewelry shop than a place where people go to satisfy a sugar craving. Inside, there is room only for a counter displaying the pastries on one side and shelves containing chocolates, jams and viennoiseries (sweet breakfast rolls) on the other; the line-up moves in a strict single file, since there isn't space to do otherwise.

When he first opened, Hermé changed his pastry “collection” every season like a clothing designer. Lately he has been giving himself more freedom, introducing new themes whenever he feels inclined. His approach is to create a signature flavor combination that serves as the inspiration for a variety of pastries. The most celebrated of these is the *Ispahan*, which started as a raspberry, rose and litchi tart and grew into a line of cakes that includes macarons and *verrines* (pastries presented in clear glasses). More recently, he has been playing with the combina-

tions of chestnut, green tea and passion fruit, or griotte (sour cherry), pistachio and mascarpone. Perhaps nothing displays a pastry chef's creativity and skill better than the macaron, chewy little almond meringues with ganache fillings, and for me Hermé's are the best in town even if some people prefer those at Ladurée or Gérard Mulot. Hermé might have gone a bit far with his latest creation, the ketchup macaron, but his passion fruit and milk chocolate macaron is something that I think everyone should taste at least once in their lives.

If Hermé's modern pastries were pretty much unrivaled (except perhaps by Ladurée and Fauchon) when he first opened his boutique, a number of up-and-coming *pâtisseries* have since provided some competition. Several of these come from luxury



restaurants, where the pastry chef traditionally plays second fiddle to the chef de cuisine. By opening boutiques, they establish names of their own and come into direct contact with the customer, something that most of them seem to relish.

Raised in Japan, **Sadaharu Aoki** (35 Rue de Vaugirard, 6th; 56 Blvd du Port-Royal, 5th) trained with French pastry chefs before establishing a workshop that supplied Paris tea rooms, hotel restaurants and fashion houses such as Kenzo, Chanel and Dior. He opened his first Paris boutique the same year as Pierre Hermé, just a few blocks away. As gleaming white as Hermé's is charcoal, it can feel a little sterile until you lay eyes on the pastries. With a weakness for Japanese flavors and an enduring fondness for éclairs, I can't resist his green tea or black sesame version, each of which is remarkable for its crisp choux pastry. His new macaron, the yuzu praliné, shows his unique talent for balancing French and Japanese flavors. But the surest sign of his good judgment is the extraordinary vanilla millefeuille, a French classic that he considers too perfect to tweak.

Just as creative are Didier Mathray and Nathalie Robert, who both worked as pastry chefs with

Pierre Gagnaire before opening **Pain de Sucre** (14 Rue Rambuteau, 3rd) together a few years ago. In doing so, they gave up a spontaneous style of pastry-making to create cakes with a longer shelf life. The pair won my heart instantly by coming up with éclairs that are totally new, in an age where macarons are by far the more fashionable cake. Clara is an éclair with a mint-infused chocolate filling, while Jambiani's filling is flavored with passion fruit pulp and salted butter caramel. Their cakes often have a whimsical touch and even the classics come with a twist, such as the *baba au rhum* pierced in the center with its own little vial of rum for dousing the cake. Gorgeous as their cakes are, I'm always just as impressed by their breads and sweet rolls, which look almost too beautiful to be real: it's rare for a shop to do bread and pastries equally well.

Another restaurant pastry chef turned boutique owner is Fabrice Le Bourdat, who went from the luxury hotel Le Bristol to a small shop facing the Square Trousseau, around the corner from the Marché d'Aligre. **Blé Sucré** (7 Rue Antoine-Villon, 12th) still looks much like a neighborhood bakery, until you step inside. Here, too, bread and cakes meet an equally high standard: His *Rétrodo* is one of the best baguettes you'll find anywhere in Paris, and the croissants are exemplary. I first realized the magnitude of Le Bourdat's talent when I tried the lemon tart, with its beautiful domed filling. It's a relatively simple pastry but few *pâtisseries* get it right, often making the crust too thick or the filling too sweet. Among the small collection of more complex pastries, I like the *Aligre*, which contains layers of coconut dacquoise, coconut sabayon and confit pineapple. Prices are lower than at other top *pâtisseries*, and the experience is more down to earth, with a few outside tables at which you can sip coffee and enjoy your cake.

The most recent boutique to have been opened by a restaurant pastry chef is **Carl Marletti** (51 Rue Censier, 5th), run by the former pastry chef of the Grand Hotel Intercontinental and Café de la Paix. What I most appreciate about this boutique, besides the crackly crusted éclairs and religieuses, is the smiling face of Marletti and his staff, who look genuinely happy to be there. Not that staff in other boutiques look unhappy, but the haute pastry experience can be a little serious at times. When I ordered the raspberry millefeuille (pictured here) one morning and proceeded to tuck into it at one of the tables outdoors, they smiled at the sight of my enjoyment. Besides the berry millefeuille, Marletti does variations with chocolate and passion fruit or praline.

You might be wondering if it's reasonable to pay €4.50 or more for a single pastry. My view has always been that in a city of so many inaccessible luxuries, pastries are the one small luxury that is within reach of most people, at least occasionally. Who needs a diamond ring, anyway?

—By Rosa Jackson

way. That relative simplicity comes from having only three bins to choose from: a white one for glass; a yellow one for paper, plastic bottles and lightweight aluminum; and a green one for a host of materials deemed “non-recyclable.” Collected by the City, household waste is taken for further sorting by Sycdom, the processing company for the larger Parisian conurbation. Plastic bottles, for example, are recycled into pipes, cables, flooring and fleecy material. A ton of recycled cardboard will save 2.5 tons of fresh wood. Still, none of this makes Paris exemplary in the recycling stakes. Of the 1.3 million tons of city waste collected in 2007, only around 143,000 tons came from the yellow and white bins. Over half the total waste in Sycdom’s charge was incinerated, though not before the steam by-product was exploited as heating in local homes.

Some areas of France recycle more intensively, so why such pragmatism here? One reason is that, in a city as densely occupied as Paris, accommodating a full complement of bins in communal areas is no easy matter. Another is that Parisians are famously un-slavish when it comes to regulations, so complicated ones are even more likely to fail. Ultimately, though, the Mairie’s approach will have wisdom on its side if it succeeds in its latest endeavor. Over the next four years, 50,000 Parisians will be taking part in a project to assess and reshape consumer habits. The goal is to radically reduce waste at the source. That would be the most benign outcome of all.

If you were in town recently, you may have noticed the city looking unusually sober by night. Lights on museums, bridges, monuments and other public buildings have been going out at 10pm instead of midnight. (Even the Eiffel Tower stopped twinkling an hour earlier than usual.) The decision came in response to electricity consumption, which hit an all-time peak as city temperatures dropped. But it also indicates a sharpening of the City’s policy on energy, as the Plan Climat’s targets come into focus. Tougher ambitions on energy conservation in buildings have inspired projects like the 93 new apartments at Porte de la Chapelle (18th), bristling with bioclimactic design and solar panels. Still in the north of the city, work will soon start on exploiting geothermal reserves to supply local heating, while the new Batignolles development (17th) is already being billed as an all-round “eco-quartier.” Out west, La Défense has become an unlikely model for sustainable development, thanks to the energy efficiency of both new buildings and older ones that have been refurbished.

So far, so good—but that, you could say, is the easy part. By the end of next year, all public buildings must undergo a green audit and, with large tracts of the city built before 1900, it is sure to confirm what everyone already knows: Paris is an energy-conservation calamity. All the more encouraging, then, that

two historic buildings in the Marais are about to get the eco-treatment, which will bring them up to 21st-century expectations. When fully renovated, the social housing on Rue Ste-Croix-de-la-Bretonnerie will have optimal insulation, high-efficiency gas central heating and 40 square meters of photovoltaic panels on their roofs, lightening the building’s carbon footprint. What’s good news for the environment is also good news for the residents, whose heating bills will be cut by half. The estimated cost is 15-20 percent higher than a conventional renovation; however, as a model for what can be achieved in a historic conservation zone, the benefits should be invaluable.

In many ways, the Marais will be a crucible for the City’s ambitions on sustainable



development. Built up and heavily frequented, the area is protected by a 1960s heritage plan, innovative in its day, but now requiring a 21st-century overhaul. Having risen to the challenge of placing Vélib’ stations, local officials must soon deliver a coherent cycling route through the quartier’s knotty one-way system. They must also come up with parking spots for Autolib’, while seeking to resolve the congestion problems that peak each summer. (That’s when the world and his family roll up, by car, to enjoy pedestrian events such as Paris Plages.) Yet there is also a genuine sense of urgency to set in motion long-term environmental projects at a local level. It’s a reflection of the green momentum in the city as a whole.

“It’s been some time since climate change stopped being a matter for debate and became a reality, but we’re not yet suffering the consequences,” says Danièle Fandoux, who heads up Forum 21, the 4th arrondissement’s coordinating committee on sustainable development projects. “That’s what makes it so interesting, and it’s why we wanted to step up the pace on our initiatives. We’re trying to construct something positive, change people’s behavior and work with businesses on a new economic approach.”

Give credit where it’s due. The building where we sit, a cavernous old town hall with high windows and drafty stairwells, has just undergone a carbon audit; the results are pending. Nearby, a school has been selected as a local pilot case for a full eco-upgrade. The prospects look good for vertical planted walls and

the installation of more solar panels on historic buildings (until recently, this was a subject that was taboo in the oldest part of Paris). Down the line there are plans to engage large retailers in a scheme to reduce packaging materials, thereby cutting waste. Ideas that were once the preserve of green lobby groups are now part of the mainstream—and are gathering pace. You could call it the Plan Climat Effect.

The City’s sweeping objectives are all well and good, but that still leaves another, more subtle challenge, without which they can have little hope of succeeding. Paris must turn its citizens into “eco-citizens.” When I’m out in the street or surfing the Internet, it strikes me that the City administration now has something to say on just about every aspect of the environment. The proselytizing runs all the way from tree-planting programs in Madagascar to washing your jeans in cold water (presumably without adding extra detergent to compensate). And what about turning down the thermostat at home? (“Living at 66°F is possible—and it’s good for the pocket, too.”) It’s hard to see how even the most obdurate “citoyen” could resist such a bombardment for long. Then again, I’m not Parisian.

Nor am I dog owner (perhaps it shows). There are approximately 150,000 dogs in this city. Every day, in the joyless ritual that sums up a dog’s life in Paris, these hapless hounds are taken out and trailed around the block until they are empty. Collectively, they produce 18 tons of “déjections canines” every day, and some of them are left in situ—despite the threat of fines of up to €450. As a consequence—official figures, here—650 people are involved in dog pollution-related accidents a year. (Make that 651, in a good year.) What hope is there of engaging people in day-to-day gestures to save the planet, you may ask, when a minority cares so little about their own backyard?

But here, too, there are signs that attitudes are changing. This is not simply because the problem has improved somewhat—though everyone agrees that it has. Seventy percent of Parisians who took part in the latest “Baromètre de Propreté” (an annual survey of attitudes on the city’s cleanliness) spontaneously claimed dog-soiling as the nuisance they found most objectionable, and many support stiffer enforcement of penalties. In other words, the backlash has finally come. And if it results in an “uncivic” minority taking responsibility for their own environment, who knows what clean, green future that may eventually lead to?

And luck? Luck has nothing to do with it.

Paris Fact: During the Occupation, the address of 93 Rue Lauriston in the 16th arrondissement was known to be the address of the “Gestapo Française.” The address has been stigmatized ever since. Recently, officials renamed it 93 bis Rue Lauriston.

Sonia Rykiel (1930-)

She was the first: figure-hugging black fabrics, exposed insides and unfinished hemlines. How about sponges as couture? To celebrate the 40th anniversary of fashion designer Sonia Rykiel, here is a first-ever retrospective of the couturière's work. Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Mode et Textile. Until April 19. Site: www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr.

Crinolines

Over 300 examples of women's dresses and fashion accessories from 1852 to 1870, the trendy Second Empire. Crinolines (stiffened or hooped petticoats) were worn to make a long skirt stand out; it was all about the curves from head to toe. Musée Galliera. Until April 26. Site: www.galliera.paris.fr.

Climate Revealed by Ice

To study the world's climate, you have to go to the poles, which have become, in the last 50 years, natural laboratories. This expo explores the many factors that affect climate. Musée des Arts et Métiers. Until April 30. Site: www.arts-et-metiers.net.

Jean Marais (1913-1989)

In "Eternal Comeback," the life of French big-screen and stage actor Jean Marais is explored via 400 photos, letters, costumes, paintings and more. Best known for his role in "Beauty and the Beast" (1946), Marais was the star of many swashbuckling movies. Musée de Montmartre. Until May 3. Site: www.museedemontmartre.fr.

Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978)

Italian Surrealist painter De Chirico, considered a major artist of the 20th century, inventor of "metaphysical painting," has not been exhibited in Paris in 25 years. This exhibit attempts to give the artist a fresh and modern perspective. Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Until May 24. Site: www.mam.paris.fr.

David LaChapelle (1963-)

This photographer's work is well worth seeing: frivolous, humorous, shocking at times and surreal. It's also surreal that this exhibition is taking place at the Paris Mint, which is attempting to broaden its cultural horizons. The Mint is a

beautiful and worthwhile visit in itself. Monnaie de Paris. Until May 31. Site: www.monnaieparis.fr.

Leaving Rodin Behind?

Sculpture in Paris, 1905-1914. At the dawn of the 20th century, Rodin reigned supreme. New generations were seeking to free themselves from his influence. This expo features the work of artists from all over Europe (Brancusi, Archipenko, Maillol, Duchamp-Villon and others) as they experimented with a new "feeling for form and line." Musée d'Orsay. Until May 31. Site: www.musee-orsay.fr.

Italian Primitives

From Siena to Florence, the Italian Primitives from the Altenburg collection. Fifty works—all painted by the greatest masters of the pre-Renaissance and early Italian Renaissance—that transformed Italian art. Musée Jacquemart-André. Until June 21. Site: www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com.

The Jazz Century

Created by art critic Daniel Soutif, this exhibit presents the relationship between jazz and the graphic arts, chronologically, throughout the 20th century. It pays particular attention to the development of jazz in Europe and France during the 1930s and 1940s. Musée du Quai Branly. Until June 28. Site: www.quaibrany.fr.

The Gates of Heaven

"Visions of the world in ancient Egypt." Spanning three millennia, from the Old Kingdom to the Roman Period, this exhibition endeavors to place everyday objects in their social, religious and artistic context. The Gates of Heaven were the doors of a sanctuary housing the statue of a divinity. Louvre. Until June 29. Site: www.louvre.fr.

Art Deco Jewelry

A celebration of both Art Deco jewelry and the work of jeweler Jean Després. "Bijou Art Déco et Avant-Garde" displays 180 Després pieces alongside the work of other great French jewelers from the 1930s. Musée des Arts Décoratifs. Until July 12. Site: www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr.

Andy Warhol (1928-1987)

This is the big event of the spring/summer season. "Le Grand Monde d'Andy Warhol" brings

together 250 Warhol creations, among them some of his best portraits from the 60s on. This collection of work "constitutes an archive without precedent in the history of painting and photography." Grand Palais. Until July 13. Site: www.grandpalais.fr.

Alexander Calder (1898-1976)

"The Paris Years: 1926-1933." On exhibit here are early examples of Calder's work: "assemblies of recycled materials and objects, held together by wire." These works proved to be models for his first masterpiece, "The Circus," produced in Paris, and other large mobiles and stables of painted metal. Centre Pompidou. Until July 20. Site: www.centrepompidou.fr.

Valadon (1865-1938)/Utrillo (1883-1955)

"Montmartre at the turn of the century, from Impressionism to the School of Paris." Maurice Utrillo was the son of model, muse and painter Suzanne Valadon. Both characterized the Bohemian life of Montmartre; each straddled important periods in French art. Pinacothèque. Until Sept 15. Site: www.pinacothèque.com.

William Blake (1757-1827)

He was unrecognized during his life, but he is now considered a seminal figure in the history of poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age. Here for the first time in France is a retrospective of the great English Romantic. Musée du Petit Palais. April 2-June 2. Site: www.petitpalais.paris.fr.

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944)

This is a major retrospective of the artist credited with painting the first modern abstract works. It brings together 100-plus paintings, including works from the two high points of his creation: the Blue Rider and the Bauhaus. Centre Pompidou. April 8-Aug 10. Site: www.centrepompidou.fr.

La Force de l'Art 02

The second showing of this triennial event hopes to eclipse its first-run success. La Force aims to "put on stage contemporary French creation and the artists who bring it about, under the dramatic nave of the Grand Palais." Grand Palais. April 24-June 1. Site: www.laforcedelart.fr.

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