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Le Timbre
Spirit of St-Louis
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Gaggle of Guinguettes

PARIS

n o t e s

Euro June 15: .822
Euro May 12: .841
Rain Days: 12
High Temp: 76°F/24°C
Low Temp: 58°F/14°C
Nat'l Holidays: July 14, Aug 15

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EMPIRE BUILDING

By Mary McAuliffe

"I intend to make Paris the most beautiful capital in the world," Napoleon once said

Tucked into an inconspicuous little museum in the shadow of Notre Dame are two small gilded bees, rare survivors of Napoleon Bonaparte's extravagant imperial coronation of 1804. They are a small-enough memento of a long-ago event, and yet are still capable of creating a small thrill of recognition—exactly as Napoleon intended. Mindful of how quickly grand occasions can disappear into history's dustbin, Bonaparte—aided by a battery of designers and planners, as well as by Jacques-Louis David's monumental painting of the event—infused his coronation with the kind of opulence and drama that history would not easily forget. And so, long after decorations such as these gilded bees (Napoleon's imperial insignia) disappeared from the coronation site at Notre Dame, the legend lingered on.

Clearly Napoleon was not about to leave his place in history to chance. Given his deep and abiding determination to conquer history as well as Europe, this meant staging events, such as his coronation, with an eye to posterity. It also meant leaving permanent legacies of his event-filled reign, whether by massively overhauling the French legal, financial and administrative systems, or by making gargantuan efforts to build and repair the nation's bridges, harbors and roads. Intent on reminding countless future generations of his heroism and greatness, he created enduring monuments of the sort no one can ignore. Victories in the battlefield earn one a place in the history books, but Napoleon wanted something more—the kind of instant recognition and acknowledgment accorded to only a very few throughout the centuries.

All of France was his palette, but Paris was his masterpiece, the jewel in his crown. "I intend to make Paris the most beautiful capital in the world," he once remarked, and he set about this task with dizzying focus and energy. He thought in terms of monuments, but also in terms of Paris as a whole—a city that had once glowed with splendor but suffered widespread destruction during the Revolution. As always, Napoleon thought big, basing his plans on sound engineer-

ing as well as on what he had seen and read of classical Greece and Rome. The outcome, just as he intended, was magnificent.

It is difficult to walk about in the heart of today's Paris without seeing the tangible results of Bonaparte's vision—a vision that so often was inextricably linked with his military victories. The Louvre's Cour Napoléon, for example, recalls the enormous impact he made on this venerable institution. Aided by sharp-eyed experts who skimmed off the cream, Bonaparte came close to making the Louvre the repository for all of Europe's greatest masterpieces, not to mention



a remarkable haul from Egypt. The plunder was incredible, and soon it became clear that more space was needed. Renaming it the Musée Napoléon, Napoleon soon began to make his mark on the building's physical edifice as well.

Work on the Louvre had halted more than a century before, when Louis XIV left for Versailles. Now Napoleon took up the long-standing royal tradition of expanding the complex, undertaking the daunting task of completing its northernmost side all the way to the Tuileries palace, via a vast connecting gallery. He got about half way before events intervened. Several decades later, his nephew, Napoleon III, completed the job.

Following Waterloo, his victorious foes wanted their art back, and much of this vast hoard found its way home. (For the record, the Mona

Lisa is not one of Napoleon's trophies. She arrived in France with Leonardo and has stayed there ever since, except for a brief hiatus when an Italian workman, mistakenly thinking that Napoleon was responsible for her Louvre residence, attempted to return her to Italy.) Today's Louvre is of course a magnificent museum, but it is not quite what Napoleon had in mind.

Just beyond the Cour Napoléon rises Bonaparte's famous Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel, built to celebrate some of the emperor's most stunning victories. Modeled after the Arch of Septimius Severus, this arch originally served as a splendid entrance to Napoleon's imperial residence, the Tuileries palace, which then stretched across the western edge of the Louvre complex. (That was before the Communards torched the palace in 1871, leaving the Third Republic to raze its charred remains.) Bonaparte topped this fine arch with one of his chief prizes, the four antique horses from St. Mark's, in Venice. These eventually were returned and replaced by a new bronze and gold group starring four similar horses, but this time in an arrangement that honored the restored Bourbon monarchy.

Interestingly, the name "Carrousel" considerably predated Bonaparte and his triumphal arch, and in fact summons up memories of Louis XIV, the Sun King.

Louis celebrated the birth of his first son by throwing an over-the-top bash there, featuring an eye-popping equestrian display known as a carrousel. Ever after, this area has been known as the Jardin du Carrousel. Napoleon couldn't erase these associations, but he could and did overwhelm them. Nowadays, the Jardin du Carrousel and its triumphant arch summon up images of Bonaparte, not Louis XIV.

Elsewhere in Paris, Napoleon was just as successful in replacing the Sun King in public memory. The Porte St-Martin (10th) and neighboring Porte St-Denis (10th), which grandly commemorate Louis XIV's military victories, had for over a century served as the great ceremonial arches into Paris. Napoleon began to build the even more magnificent Arc de (continued on page 7)

Over a year ago, I wrote here that Les Halles was something “I don’t like about Paris—and that is a very short list” (PN, Feb 03). Mayor Delanoë had just announced his intention of renovating the Forum des Halles and the Les Halles neighborhood. As we write in “Petites Notes,” there has been an ensuing architectural contest that has been narrowed to four architects. Well, I expressed how much I didn’t like Les Halles, but I’m sorry to say that I like the four proposed projects (which you can see at www.projetleshalles.com) even less. With the exception of David Mangin’s proposal, which is by comparison to the others, a minimalist, practical and somewhat traditional approach, I just don’t get what the City and the architects were thinking.

Les Halles is, literally, the center of the city—and that’s what the proposals don’t reflect. Les Halles represents an opportunity. An opportunity to be a people magnet, a place where people go just to go, to meet, to hang out, to watch people, to feel comfortable and to feel like they are in the middle of something—special. Think: the parvis in front of Notre Dame, underneath the Eiffel Tower, the Champs-Élysées, the Bastille, the pools in the Luxembourg and the Tuileries, the Palais Royal and the Pyramid at the Louvre.

If you are in Paris this summer, I hope you’ll visit the “old” Les Halles. Walk around, see how you feel being there and consider what might be done to make you feel better being there. Then, I hope you will write me (address below), and let me know your thoughts. Then we can commiserate about what might have been.

Have a great summer—with a voyage to Paris, hopefully. We’ll see you in September.

—Mark Eversman, Editor
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Les Halles Decision

By the fall, the City is supposed to decide what to do with Les Halles—in theory. But, at press time, the indecision among city officials and residents seemed to be growing. Keep in mind that this will represent one of the biggest decisions for the city since, arguably, the Haussmann years. Four designs by major architects were selected from hundreds. In an on-line poll of public opinion begun in April, the design by Jean Nouvel (“les jardins suspendus” or hanging gardens) was the early favorite by a wide margin. As the poll continued into June, the design by David Mangin (“le toit transparent” or the transparent roof) was gaining ground quickly and was closing in on the leader. “Le champ des pyramides,” or the field of pyramids, by Rem Koolhaas was in third by a fairly wide margin; and way behind was Winy Maas’ “le vitrail planté” or the planted stained glass. The field has pretty much narrowed to two designs (in terms of popularity with the Parisians): Nouvel’s and Mangin’s. Nouvel’s design is complex and dense. Its main feature is a roof garden, and it would contain a great deal of commercial space. It would also be the tallest project and would take 12 years to complete (a big negative for Mayor Delanoë, who is up for reelection in 2007). Mangin’s Les Halles is fairly light, open and less ambitious architecturally. More in the tradition of Paris’ gardens, it would contain no extra commercial space, and it would take only five years to complete. Nouvel, with his bold (some would say, overstated) vision, and Mangin, with his more practical (some would say uninspired) vision, are the public’s favorites. However, Koolhaas, with his more whimsical and artistic approach, is still in the running. Adding to the unfolding drama are numerous and boisterous resident associations (always a powerful force in Paris) that have provided no consensus, as well as everyday Parisians, who are scratching their heads and picking the design they dislike the least. You can visit the *Projet Les Halles* website to view models and video tours of the four proposals: www.projetleshalles.com. Whether or not all this can be sorted out by the fall remains to be seen.

Busy Bees

Of the many forms of culture that Paris is known for, apiculture (raising bees) isn’t exactly the best known. So, it may come as a surprise to discover that over 150 man-made beehives are sprinkled around Paris. Some are in obvious places like the Parc Georges Brassens (15th) and the Jardin du Luxembourg (6th). Other locations are less obvious, like the roof of the Garnier Opera

or a convent—even balconies of private apartments. In fact, bees thrive in Paris and make an important contribution to the plant life of the city’s 400-plus parks and gardens. And, they make great honey (“miel”). Because there are so many kinds of flowers around Paris, the bees produce a honey that is sweet and unique to Paris. Want a sample? At Fauchon (26 Place de la Madeleine, 8th), the famous food specialties store, you can buy about 5 ounces of Garnier Opera honey for 11.50E. Or, at Les Abeilles (21 Rue de la Butte-aux-Cailles, 12th) you can buy about 9 ounces of honey collected from hives in the Bois de Boulogne and the Bois de Vincennes for 5.50E. Paris bees are very productive: they produce about 65 pounds of honey per year per hive, whereas the national average in France is about half that.

Apartments for Sale

The New York Times reported several months ago that the average cost of an apartment in New York City was about one million dollars. By comparison, Paris looks pretty good. A recent survey by the *Chambre Interdépartementale des Notaires de Paris* revealed that in 2003, just 10 percent of the 36,000 apartments sold in Paris were sold for more than .5E million (currently, about \$600,000). Only 497 apartments were sold for more than 1E million, and just 234 sold for more than 1.5E million. The *Chambre* reports that the average price of apartments rose 8-10 percent in 2003 versus 12-15 percent in 2002. It also estimates that 75 percent of apartments sold above .5E million were sold to non-French buyers.

Terminal Collapse

The May 23rd collapse of a section of Charles de Gaulle Airport’s 2E terminal could have been much worse. Sadly, four people were killed and three were injured, but, considering that 2E is normally very busy, the minimal death toll was miraculous. There were few people in the terminal when the 100-foot section (the whole tubular terminal is seven football fields long) crashed down at 6:57am. A number of people reported seeing and hearing overhead concrete cracking, as well as small clouds of concrete dust falling, shortly before the collapse. By the time it happened, most people had already run away. Many U.S. visitors to France know the stunning 2E terminal well as it was the departure terminal for Air France’s U.S.-bound flights. The terminal, an architectural masterpiece designed by Paul Andreu (now working on the Peking Opera), was inaugurated in June 2003, just one year after its construction was started. The giant CDG (continued on page 8)

• PARIS •
B I T E S
By Rosa Jackson



The French have a gruesome image of British cooking, based on memories of student exchange trips that inevitably seem to have involved sickeningly sweet baked beans for breakfast and gray-tinted lamb with lurid mint sauce (“beurk!”). So it takes courage for an Englishman to open a French bistro: witness the defeat in Cannes of Richard Neat, the Michelin-starred English chef whose superb seasonal cooking failed to surmount centuries of prejudice despite a perfect location facing the Palais des Festivals (he has packed up his “batterie de cuisine” and moved back to friendlier turf).

Paris, until a couple of years ago, had only two thriving Brits in the restaurant biz: Mark Williamson and Tim Johnson, co-owners of the popular contemporary bistro Willi’s Wine Bar who also run the more classic Macéo next door and the casual wine bar Juvéniles nearby. Now they have been joined by others: Susan Hunt of Le Chateaubriand, a bistro beloved by the 11th arrondissement’s black-clad fashion and media set, and Chris Wright, who runs the tiniest of restaurants, **Le Timbre**, in the tiniest of streets near Montparnasse.

This might lead you to think that Wright’s ambitions are modest—far from it. His restaurant, including the open kitchen, might be the size of the average student garret, but this native of Manchester aims high. Like an haute cuisine chef, he insists on the finest ingredients, with no microwave and no freezer in his kitchen (there would be no room for them anyway), and challenges himself to find new ways of bringing out their exceptional qualities.

All this happened by accident—Wright took over in the kitchen only after his first chef left two years ago, and had never worked as a cook. “It’s been a steep learning curve,” he says, but he has a dream teacher in his pal David, who is second-in-command to Guy Martin at Le Grand Véfour and helped him develop Le Timbre’s style. His menu of three to four starters, main courses and desserts changes every week. His suppliers include La Poissonnerie de Dôme, one of the finest fish stands in Paris, and Le Comptoir Corrézien, which provides truffles and foie gras to the city’s top chefs. A three-course meal costs 32E, a price well justified by the quality.

Arriving at 8pm sharp on a weeknight, I shared the dining room with an American couple clutching the excellent Time Out

All this happened by accident—Wright took over in the kitchen only after his first chef left two years ago

Paris Eating & Drinking Guide and a couple of French locals. Without even asking—oh joy!—I was served a complimentary glass of white Cheverny as I waited for my friend to arrive. “How I love wine,” I thought, already in a good mood as I watched Chris (you feel like calling him by his first name) toiling calmly, alone, in the kitchen. By the time Linda arrived, flustered—don’t go looking for this restaurant without a map—I already knew what I wanted to eat.

Taking the cue from our neighbors, I chose the tartines de légumes—strips of lightly cooked zucchini and carrot on toasts spread with tapenade. The tapenade could have been a bit more flavorful, but since making Nice my second home, I am fussy about my tapenade. Just as spring-like was Linda’s plate of green asparagus, elegantly cut in half lengthwise and served with dabs of anise-spiked sauce and balsamic vinegar, and a little crumbled Parmesan cheese.

Like these starters, main courses were pure in presentation and flavor—my thick slab of pork, pan-fried but not the least bit dry, came with petals of red onion that retained a light crunch, while juicy guinea fowl was served on a bed of tomato and pineapple “chutney.” Only I had room for dessert, so I jauntily continued with the outstanding millefeuille du Timbre—a delicate square of puff pastry and vanilla cream assembled at the last minute. The ruby-red strawberry soup, served in a wide, shallow bowl, looked just as tempting.

Unfortunately, we skipped cheese and thus missed the menu’s cheeky jab at the French: “le vrai et le faux fromage.” “Le vrai” is a two-year-old cheddar supplied by Neal’s Yard Dairy in London and “le faux” is a small cheese from the Ardèche. “Don’t the French get offended by this?” I asked Chris. “Not as much as they should,” he said, “but it’s all to do with rugby.”

As we were polishing off the last millefeuille crumbs, a party of 10 arrived, an hour late, and Chris maintained an admirable sang-froid (or maybe it was a stiff upper lip). Put a French chef alone in an open kitchen and he would have no one to yell at but the hapless diners. Chris, happily, has absorbed only what is great about French culinary tradition.

•Le Timbre: 3 Rue Ste-Beuve, 6th. Tel: 1-45-49-10-40.



Most people who have overcome all the

obstacles to have a meal at L’Atelier de Joël Robuchon would agree that it’s one of the city’s great eating destinations, if not the world’s. It came fourth recently in Restaurant Magazine’s list of the best restaurants on the planet, behind the French Laundry in the Napa Valley, The Fat Duck in a suburb in London (how’s that for a lesson in humility?) and El Bulli in Spain. Most people who have eaten at L’Atelier would also agree that a meal here comes with certain irritations, namely the no-reservations policy ruthlessly accompanied by a door that opens only on the inside, all the better for slamming in people’s faces.

Robuchon has now addressed the problem by having staff call people on their mobiles when their table is nearly ready, but this still seems less than satisfactory for those with limited patience and time to spare. The good news is that, with little fanfare, Robuchon has just opened a new restaurant in the 16th. The menu at **La Table de Joël Robuchon** is similar to L’Atelier’s. It offers small and big plates, there are real tables and chairs, and you can make reservations. Chef Frédéric Simonin worked with Ghislaine Arabian here before running Le 16 au 16, which La Table has replaced while keeping the gold-leaf décor. He and pastry chef François Benot bring a northern French touch to the menu with creations such as crushed spice biscuits with poached rhubarb, Kriek (beer) ice cream and strawberries, but Robuchon classics like merlan Colbert and “that” potato purée are also, reassuringly, there.

•La Table de Joël Robuchon: 16 Ave Bugeaud, 16th. Tel: 1-56-28-16-16.

Visiting Provence? Rosa Jackson is offering hands-on half-day and full-day food tours and cooking classes in a beautifully renovated apartment in the heart of Nice. For details, see www.petitsfarcis.com. For visitors to Paris, Rosa provides custom-designed food itineraries with www.edible-paris.com.

NOTE: Before you make your summer trip to Paris, be sure and visit our Super Links page at www.parisnotes.com (your passwords to the subscribers-only section of the website are on page 2, column 1). There you will find hundreds of useful Paris links to everything under the sun. This compendium of Paris links is the most comprehensive link list on the Web—and it’s free to subscribers.

SPIRIT OF ST-LOUIS

Close to the “mainland,” the Ile St-Louis remains a place apart

I came to live on the Ile St-Louis in 1992 and soon discovered that the word “island” in my address was not a joke. The shops kept different hours from those of the rest of Paris, closing for lunch from 1pm to 4pm. The fishmonger offered free delivery, but there was a small charge for delivery “sur le continent.” The little general store informed me that the kind of light bulb I wanted could only be obtained “dans Paris.” Were we not in Paris, then? Apparently not.

The Ile St-Louis, although it is connected to the Notre Dame end of the Ile de la Cité by a footbridge and to the mainland by three road bridges, is a place apart, with its own unique spirit. Today it is a millionaire’s quartier, but it also contains crumbling top-floor studios like mine, which explains the curiously mixed and shifting nature of the island’s population. It has always appealed to exiles of all kinds: the rich, the poor, the famous, the foreign, the talented or the just plain eccentric. Famous “Ludovisiens” include Racine, Gide, Proust, Edith Wharton, Hemingway and President Pompidou, to name just a few.

It is easy to see what attracted them because it is all still here. Apart from the harmony of the island’s honey-colored 17th-century buildings, there is its satisfying narrow fish-shape, its spine formed by the busy Rue St-Louis-en-l’Ile, which runs its entire 600-yard length (it is only 200 yards across). But its quiet side streets, with glimpses of trees, light and water on either side, constantly remind you that you are on an island and beckon you to the quays.

These are lined by the great houses built for the courtiers of Louis XIV, flowers spilling from their balconies on the south side, their spacious courtyards hidden behind huge carved doorways. Below them stone steps lead down to the cobbled quays, the haunt of refugees from the mainland: strolling, sunbathing, sitting hand in hand or gathering for impromptu midnight parties at the western tip of the island facing Notre Dame. At night, the lights of the passing bateaux-mouches cast slowly moving shadows of trees across the buildings lining the quays, so that the whole island seems to be floating down the river, like the boat it resembles.

The best thing about the island’s generally overlooked little side streets is the way they frame glimpses of the river. Coming out of the launderette on the Rue Poulletier one day, I stopped dead, transfixed by the sinuous black curves of the branches of the trees on the Quai de Béthune. The light shone through the muted autumn colors of the leaves. It was as delicate, as unexpected and as evanescent as a Japanese print.

However, it is the Pont St-Louis footbridge, jammed on weekends with Parisians watching street entertainers and musicians, that offers the most visually dramatic view from the

island. Across the river, the flying buttresses of Notre Dame are outlined against the soft violet and primrose tints of the Paris skyline, and the Pantheon rises in the distance. Often, the plaintive sounds of an accordionist echo across the water and invite strollers to cross the footbridge. Sometimes they take a pause at the Brasserie de l’Ile St-Louis (55 Quai de Bourbon) or the Café Saint-Régis (6 Rue Jean-du-Bellay) opposite the way, with their views of the Left Bank across the river.

The natural center point of the island is the Rue des Deux-Ponts, which crosses the river from



north to south. It extends across the Seine to the Left Bank via the Pont de la Tournelle and to the Right Bank via the Pont Marie, an elegant 17th-century bridge with spectacular views of the river and the Conciergerie to the west. The nearest Métro is Pont-Marie on the Right Bank, facing the bridge. There is, bien sûr, no Métro on the island itself.

The Rue des Deux-Ponts is the unofficial frontier between the eastern and western halves of the island, originally two islands that were covered over into one in the 17th century. Each still has its own butcher, baker and cheesemonger, and residents from one half rarely shop in the other. In addition, each half has preserved a distinct personality. The western half, closest to Notre Dame, is full of visitors, boutiques, art galleries and real estate agents. I cannot honestly recommend its shops or restaurants, except for those on the no-man’s-land of the Rue des Deux-Ponts: the Franc-Pinot, a long-established jazz-café (1 Quai de Bourbon) facing the Right Bank; the Louis IX café/restaurant, which is situated almost in the dead center of the island at 25 Rue des Deux-Ponts; and L’Escale café/restaurant (1 Rue des Deux-Ponts, closed Sun), which overlooks the Left Bank and is unvisited by most tourists. The tide of strollers, mainly Americans on weekdays, outnumbered by French families on weekends, stops abruptly at Berthillon’s celebrated ice-cream parlor (31 Rue St-Louis-en-l’Ile, closed Sun and in August), a justly famed Parisian institution. You can avoid the lines outside by simply walking through to the tearoom at the back and sit-

ting down.

Beyond this magic point, the eastern half of the Ile St-Louis is all but deserted by visitors, and it is here that the island most resembles a village. Past Berthillon are the longest-established local shops on the Rue St-Louis-en-l’Ile. At the Martin family bakery at no. 40 the “baguettes à l’ancienne” are freshly baked several times a day and attract lines of well-informed Parisians. There are more lines inside the shabby little shop of M. Bernard Lefranc, the cheesemonger next door; he’s been selling a small but fine selection of modestly priced cheeses for 40 years. Two doors down at no. 34 is the tiny toyshop-cum-stationery, Les Insulaires, owned by Mme Fain, an 85-year-old cat and dog lover known to everyone on the island and beloved by generations of children. At no. 26 is the equally minute Pays d’Ulysse bookshop, which specializes in unusual second-hand travel books. The chocolate cake at the even smaller La Charlotte de l’Isle pâtisserie at no. 24 (open Thurs-Sun afternoons) is, I am assured by chocolate-loving Parisian friends, to die for.

At the deserted eastern extremity lies a discreet family mansion, the high walls of its triangular garden jutting out like the prow of a ship that divides the Rue St-Louis-en-l’Ile from the Quai d’Anjou. It belongs to the Rothschilds, although I have never actually seen anyone emerge from it. Here is the secluded world of the great houses on the quays, the most astonishing of which is the Hôtel de Lauzun at 17 Quai d’Anjou, constructed by the architect of Versailles, Le Vau, and decorated by its painter, Le Brun. The Hôtel de Lauzun is owned by the City of Paris and can rarely be visited, but even its drainpipes are worth stopping for. They are in the form of dolphins, their scales picked out in gold. Baudelaire lived on the top floor in 1843 when it was the meeting place for the Club des Haschischins (Hashish Eaters) at a time when the island was less fashionable than when it was first built, or than it is now.

The Ile St-Louis, with its romantic streetlamps, tree-lined quays and river views of Paris, sometimes reminds me of a film set, and in fact it is often used as one. At other times, especially in winter and at night, with the Seine swirling darkly around it, it is both mysterious and melancholy, a place outside time. Its spirit is that of a village that is not quite a village. It is a place of passage that welcomes exiles of all kinds, whether from their country or from their usual habits: those who love islands.

—By Annabel Simms, author of “An Hour From Paris” (Pallas Athene, 2003)

PARIS FACT: The average Parisian eats 165 grams (5.82 ounces) of bread daily. This is up 15 grams from 10 years ago.

PARIS FACT: The tallest tree in Paris is a sycamore in the Parc Buttes-Chaumont (19th); it is 30 meters (about 100 feet) high.

PARIS FACT: The oldest tree in Paris is located in the Square Viviani (5th). It is a Robinia that is estimated to be 400 years old.

Ritz's New Recipe

By Ethan Gilsdorf

On day five of week eight of the intermediate-level Ritz Escoffier Course, Christophe Bellet scolded the students three times. And it was only 11am. One chef-to-be made the mistake of scraping a knife across his chopping block, dulling the blade. Another failed to use the most efficient arm motion to whip the communal mayonnaise. And the group had not properly separated the scallions from their roots, potentially wrecking the basil and lemongrass crab cakes.

So, when asked to line up before the master in his towering chef's hat and, one by one, subject each vinaigrette to the judgment of his impeccable taste buds, this band of wannabe chefs from America, Austria, Colombia, Japan, Korea and Mexico began to balk. "Too acidic," chef Bellet said, dipping a spoon into one dressing. "Too salty." Then: "Pas mal."

A devilish smile crept across his face. "OK, let's eat." Bellet brought out the wine, and everyone sat down to feast on their creations: pumpkin soup with chestnuts, salad with white asparagus, pan-fried crab cakes and a double chocolate croquant. Fortunately, Bellet's pedagogical technique isn't all nerve-wracking salad dressing analyses. This 10-year L'Espadon veteran deftly keeps his class of eight students on track with the rallying cry, "Maintenant, on va attaquer le ..." For a hotel known to be stuffy, the Ritz's basement teaching kitchen seems surprisingly down to earth. In fact, the cooking school celebrated its 15th birthday this year by renovating not only its classroom (now with La Cornue stoves and new cabinets) but also its curriculum and old-fashioned attitude.

Yes, you can still sign up for the coveted 30-week Superior Diploma in French Cuisine and Pastry, which includes the foundation-level six-week César Ritz Course, Bellet's 10-week Escoffier and the three-month Art of French Pastry—all for a mere 28,100E. But if that price tag makes you gag, the Ritz also has a series of more digestible offerings.

New for 2004 are classes called "Initiation or the Pleasure of Discovery." Included are the "Ritz Saturdays" hands-on beginner workshops (125E), which teach students how to prepare classic and modern seasonal French dishes, such as "Valentine's Day menu" and "Autumn fungi."

The "All About..." evening sessions (95E) discuss quick and simple preparations of, say, asparagus or mullet; the "Pairing Foods with Wines" sessions (125E) go into dinners and wine tastings; and two-day Juniors Summer Sessions (170E) are for 10- to 17-year-olds interested in "cooking vegetables" or "learning basic sauces." These are joined by an existing range of short-term classes for adults and children of all ages, all taught in French with English translation.

Also new this year are more advanced (and pricey) "Perfecting Skills" classes like "French Bread Making" and "French Viennoiserie Breakfast Pastry," an evening "Master of Pastry Ritz Escoffier" certification, and the Ritz Escoffier Master Class (including a week-long Ritz Main Kitchen internship). A third of the Art of French Pastry sessions include new topics like "Parties and Receptions" and "All about Chocolate."

But speaking of chocolate, meanwhile, back in week eight, Bellet was going wild. A student playfully talked back to the chef. Big mistake. Bellet responded by dousing him with cocoa powder. "Oops." Then that smile. "It's more than a school here," Bellet later pronounced. "You need to be good humored." Could Bellet's careful blend of culinary rigor and joie de vivre signal an overall shift at the Ritz? Imagine that: the Escoffier as informal, accessible and halfway affordable, too.

•Ecole Ritz Escoffier: 38 Rue Cambon, 1st. Tel: 1-43-16-30-50. E-mail: ecole@ritzparis.com. Site: www.ritzparis.com.



▲ PARIS VISITS ▼

An Icon's Park

By Jacqueline McGrath

Neighborhood parks aren't normally considered tourist attractions, but Paris' Parc Georges Brassens in the 15th arrondissement should be—especially for families. Spanning 18 acres, it represents one of the largest leisure spaces made available to the public since Adolphe Alphand, landscape designer for Napoleon III, dotted the city with charming parks. What's special about Parc Georges Brassens is its diversity, offering visitors activities that range from rock climbing to rollerblading to sniffing a wondrous herb garden.

To truly appreciate the park, you should know something of its past. The tract was once a thriving vineyard; later it was an abattoir that supplied meats to all of the butchers on the Left Bank. Vestiges of the slaughterhouse operation, which endured from 1898 to 1978, are evident once you walk through the open Rue des Morillons entrance. The stately iron portal is flanked by two life-size bronze bulls, the work of animal sculptor Auguste Cain. Two hundred feet forward stands the old auction hall/bell tower (now a police substation), reflected in a 60-foot oval wading pool.

While there's something here for everyone, the western end of the park serves as a year-round paradise for youngsters. Besides the essential carousel, slides and swings, there are pony rides, puppet shows, areas for rollerblading and table tennis, and—arguably, the pièce de résistance for grade schoolers—a horizontal climbing wall made up of masses of stone blocks from the demolished market halls.

On the park's east (Rue Brancion) side, two iron pavilions that once housed horses have been turned into a weekend marketplace for antiquarian and second-hand books. Year-round, about 60 booksellers offer a comprehensive inventory, most of it in French and most reasonably priced. As examples, a photo album of Picasso's paintings sells for 30E, "Joies of Football" (soft-cover) goes for 18E and a variety of wooden puzzles for

tots cost about 5E each. The serious book collector may be willing to shell out 42E for a volume of William Faulkner's writings (in French), or perhaps 1,200E for a copy of "The Lives of the Greeks and Romans," leather-bound, 780 pages long and published in 1619. Happily, most prices are negotiable. Stay too long at the

book fair and you may have to make it up to the kids. Consider treating them to a marionette show in the little park theater just steps away. En route, there are colorful rooms on stilts (which the children can access by ladder) and a garden maze of 80 odiferous plants. At various posts along the way, information in Braille allows the blind visitor to identify every scent.

All of these ground-level attractions are cushioned by sloping lawns and babbling brooks on the Rue de Dantzig side (south). There, in the shadow of gray high-rises, you can climb the hillside to admire shrubs and flowerbeds geared to every season. The hilltop wears two crowns: a tiled-roof apiary (where one can take instructions in beekeeping) and a revived Pinot Noir vineyard boasting 700 vines. The honey and the grapes are harvested and sold on the first Saturday in October. Since its inception in 1986, this semi-bucolic space has been a godsend to area residents of all ages. The park was named for poet/singer Georges Brassens, who lived on nearby Rue Santos-Dumont until he died in 1971 at age 60. Outside France his may not be a household name, but in Paris he's an icon. Brassens' poems are recited in grammar schools and his song titles distinguish the path signs in the "scent garden."

•Parc Georges Brassens: 36 bis Rue des Morillons. Open: daily, 9am-sunset. Book market: open weekends only during park hours. Marionette performances: at 3, 4 and 5pm, Wed, Sat, Sun. Tickets: 2.30E.



GAGGLE OF GUINGUETTES

Eat, drink and be merry at a guinguette just outside Paris

"A 'guinguette' is an establishment on the bank of a river where people can go to eat and dance." So runs the flier for Chez Gégène, and it is as good a definition as any. I have not come across anything quite like a guinguette outside France; like English pubs, they have an atmosphere all their own.

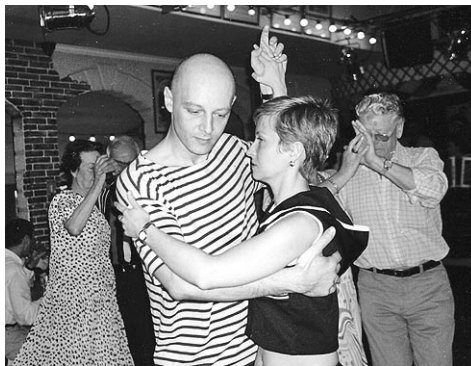
The name (pronounced gang-ETTE) refers to the wine of the Paris region that was produced in the 19th century and was cheaper if drunk outside the city limits, avoiding the tax on incoming merchandise. The origin of the word is debatable but the most likely explanation is that the wine made people "giguet," ready to dance a jig. Usually open-air restaurants with a dance-floor, guinguettes sprang up to cater to the urban working poor who wanted to relax on Sundays in a pastoral setting. In their heyday, from about 1850 to 1950, scores of them were to be found along the banks of the Seine and especially the Marne outside Paris. They offered the simple pleasures of boating, eating, drinking and dancing at affordable prices. People wore their Sunday best, waltzed or listened to traditional songs played on the accordion and ate tiny fried river fish, "la friture," washed down with "guinget" wine.

Only too predictably, very few guinguettes survived changing tastes in popular entertainment. They were hit particularly hard by the impact of television; by the 1960s, so many of them had closed down that it looked as if they would totally disappear. But since the mid-1990s there has been an unexpected revival of this most Parisian of popular traditions. New guinguettes that cater to a younger, more middle-class clientele have opened up; older guinguettes have adapted and now offer salsa, rock and reggae bands as well as the traditional accordion waltzes.

The Guinguette Auvergnate on the Seine is a flourishing part of this revival, but is less well known to Parisians than guinguettes on the Marne. I discovered it by accident, at half past three on a Sunday afternoon. The cozy boat-like interior was packed with local people who were being brought trays of dice for what looked like backgammon, as a kind of fourth course to round off a leisurely Sunday lunch. A burst of accordion music came through the folding doors at the end, where what appeared to be a private family party was in full swing. The remains of a huge cake reposed on an elaborately decorated trolley, surrounded by an impressive number of empty champagne glasses. Grandparents, parents, cousins and friends gossiped at the tables, while children ran from one group to another and the younger and not-so-young couples had already started dancing. It looked like something out of a Renoir painting. As I was leaving, I complimented the patron on his establishment. "Ici, c'est un petit coin du Paradis" came the reply.

Pause, swelling of stomach. "Et moi, je m'appelle Dieu" ("This is a little corner of Paradise. I'm called God.") I have since been back several times and can confirm that the Guinguette Auvergnate is indeed a little corner of Paradise, where the décor, the clientele and the food are in a 1950s time warp. You eat traditional family dishes at tables alongside geranium-framed windows overlooking the river, or out on the "terrasse" in summer, in the relaxed hospitable atmosphere that is part of the "esprit guinguette."

If you are more interested in dancing than food, you should go to the guinguette on the



tiny Ile du Martin-Pêcheur (Kingfisher Island) on the Marne that opened in 1991. It is so popular that you will have to book a reservation if you go on the weekend. When you get there you will see why. Access is by a little footbridge and once on the island you are instantly drawn into a sense of happy complicity with your neighbors—you are all escapees from the mainland and the rhythm of everyday life. Seated outside at long tables under green awnings, people of all ages exchange smiles of enjoyment. I was slightly taken aback one Sunday afternoon when an elderly Frenchman paused at our table: "Madame, voulez-vous danser?" and then mortified to discover that he danced far better than I did. But I need not have been. The whole point of the guinguette is to have a good time and no one there is awarding points for your skill. This guinguette attracts some younger people from Paris, but I was intrigued to see how naturally they blended in with the older generation. Everyone is relaxed, savoring the pleasure of the moment, whether they intend to dance or not, and everyone seems to know instinctively how to dance. As for the food, it is a mild rip-off, but not a tourist rip-off as there are, in fact, no tourists. The service is good-natured but can be lamentably slow. No one seems to mind.

The oldest-established guinguettes are to be found at Joinville, slightly nearer to Paris. The most famous is Chez Gégène, opened in 1918, where Jean Gabin, among others, was filmed. It is loud and brash, packed with elderly couples enthusiastically dancing. The women are over-

dressed but they certainly seem to be having a good time and you can just sit at a table outside overlooking the Marne and have a drink without paying to dance inside. It is next door to the oldest guinguette, Le Petit Robinson, founded in 1904, which is considerably more discreet, with the emphasis on tradition.

In all the guinguettes it is standard etiquette to nod and smile at fellow diners, murmuring "Bonjour/Au revoir, messieurs et dames" as you arrive or leave. If you want to enter properly into the spirit of the thing and dance, I would add a word of advice, copied from a notice at another guinguette: "Adoptez l'esprit guinguette! Pas de jeans ni baskets!" ("Get into the spirit of the guinguette—no jeans, no tennis shoes!")

—By Annabel Simms, author of "An Hour From Paris" (Pallas Athene, 2003)

•Guinguette Auvergnate (10 miles SE of Paris): 19 Ave de Choisy, Villeneuve St-Georges-Triage. Tel: 1-43-89-04-64. Open: April-Sept, Tues-Sun (open for dinner all year Fri and Sat and for Sun lunch, dancing on the 2nd and 4th Fri of the month). Menu: 17E excluding wine; Fri evening including wine and dancing, 35E. Site: www.guinguette-auvergnate.fr. Directions: RER D from Gare de Lyon to Villeneuve Triage, station opposite guinguette.

•La Guinguette de l'Ile du Martin-Pêcheur (8 miles E of Paris): 41 Quai Victor-Hugo, Champigny-sur-Marne, Tel: 1-49-83-03-02. Open: April-Oct, dinner/dancing Thurs-Sat to 2am, lunch/dancing Sun to 7pm. Menu: 25E excluding wine; no charge if dancing only. Site: www.guinguette.fr. Directions: RER A from Châtelet to Champigny. Turn left from station, then right onto Blvd de Champigny, cross Pont de Champigny, go down steps on left to towpath and walk 10 min.

•Chez Gégène (6 miles E of Paris): Allée des Guinguettes, 162 bis Quai de Polangis, Joinville-le-Pont. Tel: 1-48-83-29-43. Open April-Dec, dinner/dancing Fri and Sat to 2am, lunch/dancing Sun to 7pm. Menu 38E excluding wine, including dancing; 16E admission if dancing only. Site: www.chez-gegene.fr. Directions: RER A from Châtelet to Joinville. Exit Ave Jaurès, down Rue J-Mermoz, cross Pont de Joinville, take steps on left down to towpath and walk 15 min.

•Le Petit Robinson (next to Chez Gégène): 164 Quai de Polangis, Joinville-le-Pont. Tel: 1-48-89-04-39. Open: all year for dinner/dancing, Fri and Sat to 2am, lunch/dancing Sun to 7pm. Menu: 35E excluding wine, including dancing; 16E admission if dancing only. Site: www.le-petit-robinson.com.

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Empire Building, continued from page 1

Triomphe, which in time completely overshadowed Louis' splendid but now-overlooked entryways.

And then there is the Invalides (7th). Originally built by the Sun King to house the wounded veterans of his many military campaigns, the Invalides has since 1840 become the single monument most closely associated with Napoleon, who lies here in imperial splendor. Napoleon fans love it; his critics do not. What Louis would have thought, one can only imagine.

Even before his death, Bonaparte had already placed his inimitable mark on this part of town, which he had known longer than any other corner of Paris. As an impoverished 15-year-old, he arrived at the famed Ecole Militaire, a still-extant institution founded by Louis XV's notorious mistress, Madame de Pompadour. The second surviving son of a respectable Corsican family with far more in the way of aspirations than property, Napoleon had already established himself as unusually bright, competitive and something of a loner. After attending the military academy of Brienne, he entered the Ecole Militaire as a scholarship student. There he acquitted himself well, excelling in mathematics and falling in love with history, most especially the history of classical Greece and Rome and the lives of its great men. Tiny but scrappy, he quickly earned a reputation as studious, curious, arrogant and proud.

Ecole Militaire, on Place de Fontenoy, 7th, is not open to visitors, but its beautiful facade (by Jacques-Ange Gabriel) can easily be admired. The view from the adjoining Champ-de-Mars is also impressive. During his year here, Napoleon and his fellow cadets paraded on the Champ-de-Mars. Eventually, of course, he would inspect his own troops here, after a breathtaking rise that made him commander-in-chief of an army by the age of 27, first consul by the age of 30 and emperor at 35. In between came victory after victory, with spoils to match. Among the cartloads of money and masterpieces he hauled back from Italy was Venice's other prize, its lion from St. Mark's Square. (After Waterloo, this, too, was returned.)

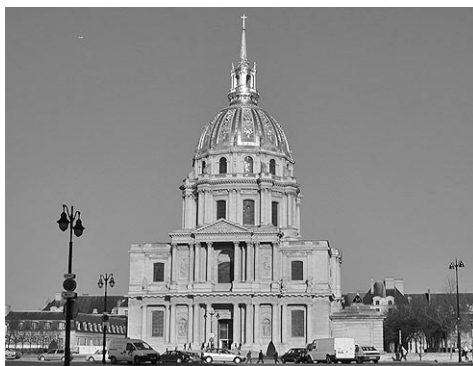
Napoleon's disastrous retreat from Moscow meant that the Kremlin would keep its treasures, but soon Bonaparte retaliated by laying plans to build a vast imperial city, one that would outshine both the Kremlin and Versailles. Waterloo put an end to this extravagant scheme, intended for the site of the current Place du Trocadéro and Palais de Chaillot, 16th, and extending all the way to the Bois de Boulogne.

Also on a grand scale, Bonaparte decided that he would gift Paris with fountains even more splendid than those of Rome. The large sphinx-bedecked fountain in the Place du Châtelet (1st), commemorating his Egyptian campaigns, is one of these. His heroically proportioned Fontaine de Mars (at the corner of Rue St-Dominique and Rue de l'Exposition, 7th) is another.

Of course, to provide a spectacular water display, or even a steady supply of drinking water, required a far better and more reliable water sup-

ply than Paris had hitherto enjoyed. Napoleon—thinking big, as always—began work on an elaborate canal system that would link Paris with the waters of the River Ourcq. Napoleon was not the first to arrive at this plan. Henri IV had given the idea serious thought, and Louis XIV had also expressed interest. But Napoleon actually put the idea into action, and with remarkable speed. As it happened, he pushed his engineers so hard to complete the work that the end product was less than stable. At the Canal de l'Ourcq's 1808 inauguration ceremony, the canal wall dramatically split open.

Still, Napoleon was not deterred. Within three years, water from the River Ourcq (via the Ourcq canal and new Bassin de la Villette) at last flowed into the Fontaine du Château-d'Eau. This fountain was a splendid affair in the midst



of what then was known as the Place du Château-d'Eau, but now is called the Place de la République. Time and Baron Haussmann have made vast changes to this spot, and now the fountain (also known as the Fontaine aux Lions de Nubie) can be found at the entrance to the Parc de la Villette, 19th. Once the connecting canals of St-Martin and St-Denis were completed, even more changes occurred to the village-like character of the whole area. The canal network fostered a surge of commercial activity and industrialization, and soon the Bassin de la Villette was no longer a place where Parisians came to stroll on a Sunday afternoon. Fortunately today, almost two centuries later, the Canal St-Martin and the Bassin de la Villette are once again emerging as the kinds of pleasure spots that Bonaparte originally had in mind.

Hand-in-glove with Napoleon's bold network of canals were other major urban improvements for Paris, including several bridges: Pont d'Austerlitz (12th), Pont d'Iéna (16th) and the beautiful Pont des Arts (1st)—a novelty built of iron and limited to pedestrians. Perhaps symbolically, the Pont des Arts connects the Louvre with the splendid domed building across the Seine that houses the Institut de France (6th). Previously quartered in the Louvre, the Institut moved to its present palatial premises under Napoleon.

Those who are interested in finance will want to amble over to Place de la Bourse (2nd), in the heart of what has become Paris' financial district. Here Napoleon created the Paris stock exchange, the Bourse, and the imposing neoclassical building that houses it. Although the building itself

was not completed until after Waterloo, it and the exchange remain an important legacy of Bonaparte's reign.

With this in mind, it's time now to take a stroll to that section of Paris where Napoleon made the greatest changes in the city landscape. Not surprisingly, it covers ground he knew the best—from the area around the Ecole Militaire and Invalides on the Left Bank to the Place Vendôme and the Church of the Madeleine (Ste-Marie-Madeleine) on the Right Bank. Stand on the Right-Bank side of the Pont de la Concorde and what do you see? Across the river and slightly to the left is the wonderful Hôtel de Salm, much admired by Thomas Jefferson, where Napoleon placed his famed Legion of Honor. But straight ahead, where your eye naturally focuses, is the National Assembly. Housed in the former Palais Bourbon, it boasts a neoclassical facade, which replaced the 18th-century original.

This was Napoleon's idea, and if you venture onto the bridge and look back, you will see why. Gaze across the Place de la Concorde, all the way to the Madeleine. It's an imposing vista, with the National Assembly's facade matching that of the Madeleine, which Napoleon built in neoclassical style. Despite its emphatically ecclesiastical lineage, the Madeleine looks more like a Greek temple than a church—exactly as Bonaparte intended. Declaring it a "Temple of Glory," he dedicated it to his Grand Army. After Waterloo, the Madeleine once again became a church.

Nearby, Napoleon wanted a splendid street leading from the Louvre all the way to the Place de la Bastille. His architects came up with the Rue de Rivoli, with its famous arcades, which until recent years were known for their elegant shops. He also insisted on a fine street (Rue de Castiglione) connecting the Rue de Rivoli with the Place Vendôme. But it was the street connecting Place Vendôme with today's Place de l'Opéra that really absorbed Napoleon's attention. He wanted it to be the most splendid street in all of Europe, and, characteristically, he wanted it to be called the Rue Napoléon. Not surprisingly, the returning Bourbon monarchs saw things differently, and Napoleon's pride and joy became the Rue de la Paix.

Ironically, the Place Vendôme itself was built by Louis XIV, and originally it was his statue, not Napoleon's, that presided here. But no matter. At the center of this ritzy spot, which some feel is akin to the center of the universe, now stands Napoleon Bonaparte himself, on his famed column (which grandly celebrates his victory at Austerlitz). He is dressed in a toga, like Caesar, and seems to be enjoying himself.

After all, why not? He succeeded magnificently in his tussle with history, stamping his name and achievements on collective memory much like the Greek and Roman heroes he so adored. And in the process, he dared to make Paris—the legendary city of legendary monarchs—his own.

Note: The museum in which you can find those imperial bees is the Musée de Notre-Dame-de-Paris, 10 Rue du Cloître-Notre-Dame, 4th. Open Wed, Sat and Sun, 2:30-6pm.

PICK OF THE MONTH

Electricity and the Artist

Electricity has inspired artists and creators to visualize a lighter, brighter world—from high-society games in the 18th century via the Great Exhibition of Paris, dedicated to Light, to James Turrell's Lightworks. This expo shows us all that electricity changed in our lives and how it continues to generate creativity. •EDF Electra, 6 Rue Récamier, 7th. Until Sept 12. Free.

MUST SEE

Ecole de Paris

50 artists of the Paris School, from Bateau-Lavoir to Montparnasse: Chagall, Van Dongen, André Derain, Foujita, Soutine, Picasso et al. •Musée du Montparnasse, 21 Ave du Maine, 15th. Until Oct 3.

The New Jeu de Paume

Under the direction of Dominique Perren, the president of the Fondation Cartier, the Jeu de Paume is now dedicated to photography, videos and film. Two expos inaugurate the splendidly renovated museum: Guy Bourdin, and a group show of historical and contemporary photos on the theme of light. •Jeu de Paume. Until Sept 19.

Jongkind (1819-1891)

This retrospective shows why John Barthold Jongkind is said to be the greatest Dutch painter since the 17th century. The work shown here illustrates his evolution from his early years in Holland to the luminous blossoming of his master works in France (from 1846 until his death in Grenoble in 1891). •Musée d'Orsay. Until Sept 9. Site: www.musee-orsay.fr.

Napoleon Bonaparte at Sea

A stunning exhibit, "Napoleon and the Sea" pays tribute to the heroic naval battles between the French and the English (1798-1808). Everything in this show is perfectly presented, showing all the foolhardy folly, incredible courage and pure fun of doing battle at sea. •Palais de Chaillot. Until Aug 23. Site: www.musee-marine.fr.

Marc Riboud

This is most certainly a "must see" for anyone really interested in the art of photography. Riboud shows a sensitivity, and technical prowess, rare in this flashy art form. His work is often cruel; that is, never sentimental or easy on the eye. •Maison Européenne de la Photographie. Until Oct 24.

Moi! (Me!)

20th-century self-portraits from Buffet to Vuillard, via Degas, Ernst, Giacometti, Miró, Picasso et al. 150 works from private collections and museums around the world that cover every movement and style of the last 100 years. •Musée du Luxembourg. Until July 25. Site: www.expo-moi.com.

Hairy Mammoths

Titled "Au Temps des Mammouths" (at the time of the mammoths), this splendid expo traces the history of the hairy mammoths, which became extinct just 4,000 years ago. •Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Jardin des Plantes. Until Jan 2005. Site: www.mnhn.fr.

WORTH A VISIT

LVMH

The luxurious headquarters of LVMH, designed by Jean-Michel Wilmot, invites visitors to see works

of art made especially for LVMH: Richard Serra, Doug Aitken, Ugo Rondinone, Gary Hall, Michal Rovner, etc. •LVMH, 22 Ave Montaigne, 8th. Sat, 10am-7pm. Free.

Jean-Paul Gautier

Gautier chose "the bakery" as the theme for his show. With madcap humor and creative wizardry, he has created much more here than fashion follies. •Fondation Cartier, 261 Blvd Raspail, 14th. Until Oct 10.

The Jacquemart-André Collection

"Par amour de l'art"—for the love of art, a perfect title for this exhibit. The treasures shown here are rarely displayed in the permanent collection of 15th- to 18th-century European art assembled by Nélie Jacquemart and Edouard André, as they were thought to be "out of context." These misfits include masterworks from the French Renaissance, ceramics, rugs, as well as objets d'art from Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey and Europe. •Musée Jacquemart-André. Until Aug 15. Site: www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com.

Threads

Tapestry as art, tapestry as craft: The beauty of the works shown here, combined with an exploration of the materials and techniques used over the centuries, makes for a fascinating show. •Musée de l'Hôtel de Sens, 1 Rue du Figuier, 4th. Until Aug 24.

Houses

12,000 Parisian houses, their history, their present: historical documents, photos, films, videos and interviews with, or about, the architects of these landmark buildings. •Pavillon de l'Arsenal. Until Aug 8. Free. Site: www.pavillon-arsenal.com.

Giuseppe Penone

Transforming natural materials: a five-ton cedar collected after the 1999 storm at Versailles, vegetables, stones and plants—Penone turns them all into his own poetic vision. In his meticulous examination of nature's intrinsic beauty and harmony, Penone does just that. •Centre Pompidou. Until Aug 28.

Traveling

The indignities inflicted on today's world travelers are neatly placed in context by this clever little expo, "Les Voyages au Moyen Age." The expo shows what it was really like to travel in the Middle Ages—from preparing for the trip to the unpredictable means of transport. •Tour Jean Sans Peur. Until Oct 21. Site: www.musee-moyenage.fr.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Bastille Day

Parades, fireworks, concerts and dancing in the streets in commemoration of the 1789 Revolution. Local fire departments hold great neighborhood parties. •July 14, all over Paris.

Paris-Plage

The Right Bank of the Seine will be closed to traffic, and sand, palm trees, entertainment and activities will be offered to the public in this third edition of Paris-Plage. •From mid-July to mid-August.

Open Air Film Festival

You can rent a deckchair or sit on the grass, bring your picnic, or just watch the big screen. This year's film festival takes chaos as its theme,

Petites Notes, continued from page 2

airport has had little problem redirecting the 60 daily flights that were departing from 2E. The terminal was open but not up to full speed, which will not take place until 2007. To build the terminal, whose main feature is thousands of small glass windows embedded in concrete, engineers had to invent a glass that could bend up to three inches to absorb the expanding and contracting cement. At press time, CDG officials did not expect any problems handling the normally heavy summer traffic.

Mariage Frères Turns 150

This year, Mariage Frères, with its 500 teas and three tranquil Paris tea salons, celebrates 150 years of importing tea to Paris. The flagship salon (also called a museum) is at 30 Rue du Bourg-Tibourg, 4th (also, 30 Rue des Grands-Augustins, 6th, and 260 Rue du Faubourg-St-Honoré, 8th), and was opened in 1986 by Kitti Cha Sangmanee, a Thailander who came to Paris to do a law thesis. A friend of his introduced him to Marthe Cottin, the last descendant of the Mariage family; at 80 she was still importing tea to Paris. Kitti befriended Mlle Cottin, who taught him the "art" of drinking tea. Soon, with his friend, he opened up the Bourg-Tibourg address and he has been running Mariage Frères ever since—with great success.

"Un monde des orages"—a stormy world indeed. •Parc de la Villette, 19th. July 16-Aug 29. Site: www.villette.com.

Tour de France

Cyclists arrive on the Champs-Élysées after their cross-country ordeal. •July 25. Site: www.letour.fr.

Classics on the Green

Mozart et al on lazy summer afternoons in the park. •Parc Floral, Bois de Vincennes, in front of the Château, 12th. Sat and Sun, 4pm. 3E to enter the park, but the concerts are free. From July 31 to Sept 19.

PLANNING AHEAD

22nd Biennial Antiques Exhibition

From old coins to old masters, ceramics to 18th-century furniture, ancient jewelry to drawings, sculpture and prints: this is the major antique show of the year. •Carrousel du Louvre. Sept 14-28. Site: www.biennaledesantiquaires.com.

FIAC 2004

Now forced to fend off ferocious competition from "perfidious Albion" (the London show is just eight days later), this year's major contemporary art fair promises to be the finest ever. •Paris Expo, Porte de Versailles. Oct 21-25. Site: www.fiac-online.com.

Salon du Chocolat

The best chocolate makers of France will display their wares. •Hall 5 at Porte de Versailles, 15th. Oct 28-Nov 1. Site: www.chocoland.com.