

Les Halles Remake  
Le Café Constant  
Flower Bowers  
Say Yunks for lunx  
Mulot the Master  
Literary Lairs

# PARIS

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## n o t e s

Euro May 12: .841  
Euro April 12: .829  
Rain Days: 12  
High Temp: 73°F/23°C  
Low Temp: 55°F/13°C  
Nat'l Holidays: none

JUNE 2004

VOLUME 13 ISSUE 5

# FRANÇOIS' FOLLIES

By David Downie

Revisiting President François Mitterrand's "grands travaux" a decade after he left office

Pharaoh, "emperor" and "king" were favorite titles given former president François Mitterrand. Admirers and detractors alike also called him "Tonton" for his avuncular charisma, or "Le Grenouille," because he looked startlingly like a frog. Mitterrand's presidency lasted from 1981 to 1994, but his heritage as a builder lives on. Like a pharaoh, he commissioned a pyramid (at the Louvre) and a Great Library of Alexandria (the Bibliothèque Nationale de France). With Napoleonic imperialism he ordered a triumphal arch (the Grand Arch) and one-upped Napoleon III with a bigger opera house (the Bastille Opera). To prove he could subsume his presidential predecessor, he adopted the unfinished projects of ex-president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing: La Villette, the Musée d'Orsay and the Institut du Monde Arabe.

Anyone who thinks Mitterrand's "grands projets" (sometimes referred to as "grands travaux") are old news should rethink: the international conference center he planned for the Quai Branly near the Eiffel Tower is only now getting underway (and will house Jacques Chirac's African art museum, instead).

With awe and horror I watched Mitterrand's follies coalesce and had the good fortune to scramble through many while interviewing the projects' prime movers. Recently I revisited the president's main offspring. Have they, as Mitterrand hoped, saved Paris from becoming a "museum city" cut off from its suburbs? Have they lastingly boosted the prestige of French architects, while indelibly impressing Mitterrand's name in the history books?

Métro line 1 links the troika of sites that were closest to Mitterrand's heart: the Louvre, Grand Arch and Bastille Opera. For the sake of chronology and convenience my first stop was the Louvre. Mitterrand's earliest and most ambitious operation was transplant surgery on what had become a dusty, dreary place whose decline threatened Gallic "gloire" and "histoire," not to mention tourism revenues. After visiting Washington's National Gallery, Tonton highhandedly hired its designer, I. M. Pei, to create Le Grand

Louvre. No architectural competition was held, a technical illegality. Mitterrand briefed Pei to respect the Louvre's historic components. His solution was the now-familiar 22-meter-high pyramid of glass and crisscrossed steel, with a single underground entrance, a theater, state-of-the-art restoration labs, a shopping concourse and parking facilities.

Like most Paris denizens, I wasn't thrilled with Pei's proposal. But I recall my bafflement when critics claimed the pyramid would "deface" the Napoleon Courtyard's facades. A historicist's hodgepodge, they were as kitsch in their day as



the pyramid was in the early 1990s. In reality, at issue was the Socialist president's perceived defiling of a royal enclave. As some pundits put it, Mitterrand marked it as a dog might.

Swept by crowds from the Métro station into the Louvre's subterranean maw, I couldn't help marveling now at Pei's success in hitching high art to consumerism. Once, the weary masses of old deciphered turgid texts or strained their eyes on the museum's badly displayed, unloved and largely looted treasures. Now, however, smiling hordes were stuffed with exotic delicacies from the merry-go-round of Louvre restaurants, casting beatific glances at skillfully lit artworks before loading up on reproductions, CDs, designer sportswear and gadgets.

Pei's single entrance was conceived to sim-

plify the Louvre's labyrinth. Experts claim it takes less time than ever to reach the Mona Lisa (the goal of 90 percent of visitors). Persnickety regulars at first grumbled about a crass Grand Louvre for beginners, and militated for the doors in the museum's many wings to be reopened. But they soon learned to slip in through the Pavillon Flore, via whatever temporary exhibition is currently being mounted there, skipping the subterranean feeding frenzy. More doors will soon reopen, the Louvre's director now promises. Everyone seems happy enough in any case.

Early on boosters said the pyramid would blend into the cityscape. They were right. As Pei predicted, the glass panes reflect changeable skies. They also collect soot, despite frequent scrubbing. Cosmetic concerns aside, I saw nary a grimace now as I shuffled with thousands from sculpture courts (where cars once parked) through restored Renaissance rooms and lavish Second Empire salons (formerly the finance minister's) to excavated medieval bastions. Back outside, I took a table at Café Marly and watched visitors dance in feathery water sprays or soak their feet in the fountains flanking the pyramid. Attendance has risen from 2.5 million in the early 80s to nearly 6 million today. What better sign of approval might a monarch desire?

Laid out in 1670 by Louis XIV's royal architect Le Nôtre, the so-called "Triumphal Way" runs west from the Louvre's Cour Carré through the glass eye of the pyramid and nearby Carrousel Arch. It then goes across the Tuileries and up the Champs-Élysées, under the Arc de Triomphe, straight across town to Tête Défense, crowned by Mitterrand's Grand Arch. My subway train covered the distance in 20 minutes. Although I couldn't see back into central Paris from La Défense's highest point, I knew the Triumphal Way, alias the "Power Axis," was there, also extending east from the Louvre to the Bastille.

Unexpectedly the Grand Arch is the sole Mitterrand project to have garnered near total support from the get-go. It actually improves La Défense, a paragon (continued on page 7)

Seems like every time I turn on the TV or go to the movies, someone is going to Paris. The movie on a recent flight to Paris was "Something's Gotta Give," with Diane Keaton and Jack Nicholson. It's an insufferably sappy love story for which I did not put on my headphones until I saw scenes of Paris. Of course, Diane and Jack set the course of their love and future happiness on the Pont d'Arcole with the stunningly lit Hôtel de Ville in the background.

The Pont des Arts, with the also stunningly lit Institut de France in the background, is the point of no return for the finally realized commitment of Carrie and Big in the final episode of "Sex in the City." The whole series, about life and love in New York, was more or less based on their on-again off-again relationship. But, the writers had to send the characters to Paris in order for the series to have a happy ending.

And just this week the long-anticipated ending of "Friends" had Paris written into the script. Rachel and Ross, who were even more excruciatingly confused—and, for me, unwatchable—in their 10-year run than were Carrie and Big, never actually went to Paris. However, in one of the last scenes they finally got around to locking in their lives together because Ross couldn't stand the idea of Rachel going to, yes, Paris.

For almost its entire history, Hollywood has known what we all know. If you want dramatic backdrops, go to Paris. If you want to put your characters in the most romantic setting possible, go to Paris. If you want all the elements of seduction—good food, beauty, atmosphere—go to Paris.

Me, I go for the bread.

—Mark Eversman, Editor  
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## rédaction

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P.O. Box 15818  
North Hollywood, CA 91615-5818

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Paris Notes (ISSN 1522-2896) is published monthly, except bimonthly in July/August and December/January, by Mark Eversman, 3204 Highland Ave, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266. Subscriptions are \$44 per year; add \$10 for foreign delivery. Periodicals Postage paid at Manhattan Beach, CA, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Paris Notes, P.O. Box 15818, North Hollywood, CA 91615-5818.

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### Les Halles Future

The debate over the renovation of the Quartier des Halles (1st) and the four project proposals of the finalist architects—Jean Nouvel, Rem Koolhaas, David Mangin and Winy Masas—continues to rage. Claude Vasconi, one of the architects responsible for the original design—almost universally despised—is upset that the public perceives the existing Forum des Halles (the underground shopping mall and a number of above-ground structures) as "a black hole, sinister and lugubrious." In an interview in the Journal du Dimanche, Vasconi said that the Forum des Halles did not turn out the way he imagined it would because Jacques Chirac (then mayor of Paris) wanted his Les Halles project finished as quickly as possible and radically changed the original plans. Chirac wanted the Forum to "smell like French fries" ("sentent la frite"). Vasconi does not like any of the four projects proposed to replace his work. To see the four proposals for the Quartier des Halles project, go to the website: [www.projetleshalles.com](http://www.projetleshalles.com). As of this writing, an online poll conducted by Le Parisien puts the Jean Nouvel proposal ahead, with 58 percent of the vote. Nouvel's design includes a hanging garden and a giant pool. The winner of the competition is scheduled to be chosen this month.

### Number One Hotel

Zagat has rated a Paris hotel, the Four Seasons George V (31 Ave George-V, [www.fourseasons.com/paris](http://www.fourseasons.com/paris)), the best hotel in the world. Receiving a score of 28 out of a possible 30, the George V is a Paris landmark, where some of the most famous people in the world have stayed (and sometimes lived temporarily). The cheapest room in the George V goes for 680E a night; the Royale Suite goes for 9,000E. The hotel is also the home of one of the best restaurants in Paris, Le Cinq, which, in the hands of star chef Philippe Legendre, received three Michelin stars in just three short years.

### Getting Grander

The Grand Palais on Ave Winston-Churchill (8th) is one of the most important buildings in Paris, both architecturally and for its business value as a prestigious convention center. By the mid 90s, the majestic 105-year-old building, which was literally sinking into the soft bank of the Seine, was also popping rivets from its magnificent glass and iron ceiling onto convention crowds below. The City closed the building and tried to figure out what to do with it for years until it finally decided that it had no choice but to renovate it. The renovation began in 2001 and is progressing nicely. Last month an enormous sculpture

by Récipon, "l'Harmonie Triomphant de la Discorde," which was removed in 2001 for a spruce-up, was raised back to its home sitting on the southeast corner of the building. The bronze and iron sculpture, a naked man riding a chariot led by four horses, will raise your eyes to the 35-meter-high roof of the palais. There you will also notice the major part of the almost-finished iron and glass ceiling, with its 14,000 square meters of transparent glass (the original glass was opaque). In July, a sister sculpture, "Immortalité Devançant le Temps," will be hoisted onto the northeast corner of the palais.

### City Walks

Chronicle Books, which has published many fine books about Paris over the years, recently put out a useful resource for those who love to walk. "City Walks: Paris" (Chronicle Books, by Christina Henry de Tesson, 2004, \$14.95, available at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) is a box of 50 index-card-sized cards, each with a short walk, or "50 Adventures on Foot." The cards have a map on one side, and a description of local monuments, historical landmarks, various points of interest and other information on the other side. The walks cover a range of areas from the well-known to the more off-the-beaten-path. The walks are one to two miles long. It's a handy package—just the right size to slip into your suitcase.

### Trees Please

In 2001 the City's official count of the number of trees in Paris was 92,000. Recently, it set a goal of increasing that number to 100,000 by 2007. The average Paris tree lives 60 years; about 1,500 a year die. The most ubiquitous tree in Paris is the "platane" (sycamore), comprising 39 percent of the total. In all, the city has 40 species of trees lining its 1,400 kilometers of streets.

### Delanoë Halfway

Mayor Bertrand Delanoë has had much to celebrate halfway through his six-year "mandat." March 25 marked three years since his election. On March 28, the mayor's party, the Parti Socialiste, became the majority party in Paris after regional elections—for the first time ever—taking 13 of 20 arrondissements. The Paris victories mean that the mayor will probably have an easy reelection in 2007. While he has proved to be a successful political tactician, his list of tangible accomplishments is short, and he has a long way to go to deliver on campaign promises before 2007. What most Parisians can point to as a Delanoë achievement is Paris-Plage, a now-annual summer event where the banks of the Seine (continued on page 8)

• PARIS •  
**B I T E S**  
By Rosa Jackson



What do Yves Camdeborde, formerly (yes, formerly!) of La Régalade; Christian Etchebest of Le Troquet; and Thierry Faucher of L'Os à Moelle have in common? All learned the haute-cuisine ropes with Christian Constant in the lofty kitchens of Le Crillon before opting out of the Michelin-star chase to open their own great-value, regional-minded bistros. So big was Constant's impact that these chefs, along with a few other successful protégés, still get together to taste new dishes and share ideas.

When you think about it, it's thanks to Constant that we can now enjoy food of haute-cuisine quality in many bistros. Given his enormous contribution to the democratization of Paris eating, it's no surprise that this jovial chef, who runs the classic restaurant Le Violon d'Ingres, has finally opened a down-to-earth bistro nearby—I only wonder why it took him so long. It was clear to me, seeing him comfortably settled at a downstairs table as I entered and left **Le Café Constant**, that he adores this place, even if the affordable fish restaurant Les Tables de la Fontaine down the street is the most recent addition to his growing empire.

Constant is not alone in being thrilled with his new project, which is brilliant in its simplicity: the menu reads like a series of nostalgic clichés, the kind of food French moms are supposed to have made but, since the 1960s, have forgotten how to prepare. No one serves veal cordon bleu in restaurants—except for Constant, who uses great-quality ingredients and serves it with a cute little macaroni gratin.

I went with my friend Marie-Noëlle, a child of the 7th arrondissement, who has come here often with her mother ever since it opened a few months ago. It's probably in a bourgeois neighborhood that the straightforwardness of this food is most appreciated; it reminds me a little of Chez Germaine, also in the 7th, where brisk mother figures serve school-canteen-inspired fare to a clientele of devoted bachelors who seem to relish being bossed around.

Le Café Constant has less "attitude"—the goal is to eat inexpensively and well in an atmosphere of zero pretension. The two-level dining room is painted cream, with red banquettes, wooden tables and some exposed bricks; the only attempts at décor are a couple of recipes handwritten in old-fashioned

French on glass, and a few bottles of flavored oil and jam for sale. The hand-written chalkboard menu is fairly extensive, with starters priced at 7E, mains at 11E and desserts at 6E. Best of all, there is a big selection of wines by the carafe at 5-7E for 25cl.

I ordered the artichoke salad, after checking that it was made with fresh artichokes, while Marie-Noëlle, with one eye on the dessert list, declined a starter. A little snooping at the next table identified two other good choices: a creamy lentil soup with morsels of foie gras, and two thin slices of foie gras mi-cuit for only a 2E supplement. A favorite of Marie-Noëlle's mother is the pumpkin soup with Gruyere, served in winter. My artichoke heart was indeed fresh, arranged around a pile of nicely dressed mesclun.

Though I had heard great things about the steak tartare here, this is an easy dish to find in Paris, so I gave in to my childish desire to try the veal cordon bleu (chicken cordon bleu was one of the first savory dishes I ever learned to make). Admittedly, its reduced meat sauce was the same sauce that appeared on MN's mi-cuit salmon with tagliatelle, but that's the kind of shortcut that keeps prices down here. The veal was crisp and golden with an irresistibly cheesy center; only the macaroni was a little dry.

Choosing between such fantasy desserts as *île flottante*, profiteroles, crème caramel and *poire belle hélène* was a challenge. However, I settled on the profiteroles while MN chose the *vacherin*, a towering version made with crunchy meringues, strawberry ice cream and vanilla ice cream (both of which tasted strangely, but pleasantly, American). The profiteroles were everything they should be—crisp on the outside, creamy and cold within, with warm chocolate sauce generously ladled over the top. We got out of here, with one coffee and a half-bottle of Badoit, for less than 50E, which these days is nothing short of astounding. Le Café Constant looks set to become a neighborhood institution; they don't take reservations, so show up early.

If you've been following the latest restaurant openings in Paris, you've probably heard about **Le Cristal Room**, the spectacular dining room in the new Maison Baccarat. Redecorated by Philippe Starck, this gallery-boutique is a glittering palace, with gently rotating chandeliers, sparkly little lights in the stairs and a soft, loungey soundtrack. You can expect to wait two months for the privilege

When you think about it, it's thanks to Constant that we can now enjoy food of haute-cuisine quality in many bistros

of sampling Thierry Burlot's cuisine here (a typical dish is the oysters in a jelly that melts as you pour hot bouillon over the top). If all you want is a taste of the glamorous life, though, reserve a day ahead for breakfast on weekdays from 8:30-10am. (The bijou dining room doesn't fill up, but they won't let you in without a reservation.) Pastries are by Pierre Hermé, and the chandeliers and glasses are by Baccarat. Tea is also served on Saturdays from 3-5:30pm with no reservations.

No, you weren't imagining things—I did say in the first sentence of this Bites that Yves Camdeborde has left La Régalade, the bistro on the edge of the 14th arrondissement that was booked up weeks ahead for three evening sittings. Shock! Tragedy! The good news is that Camdeborde has a worthy successor in 30-year-old Bruno Doucet, and that he and his wife will be reappearing very soon with a small hotel, "Pension de famille." The location hasn't yet been announced, but Camdeborde plans to open to the public only at lunch, while catering to the hotel's guests in the evening. "The kitchen will be open so that I can see everybody," he says. "The chef must be visible; he should be in his establishment to communicate with the clients and the employees." Best of all, Camdeborde doesn't plan to change his cooking style. "We have to cultivate our traditions and our *art de vivre*. The whole world envies us. I believe in change but we must change while keeping the foundations."

•Le Café Constant: 139 Rue Saint-Dominique, 7th. Tel: 1-47-53-73-34.

•Le Cristal Room: La Maison Baccarat, 11 Place des Etats-Unis, 16th. Tel: 1-40-22-11-00.

**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](http://www.petitsfarcis.com). For visitors to Paris, Rosa provides custom-designed food itineraries with [www.edible-paris.com](http://www.edible-paris.com).

**PARIS FACT:** The British are the number one visitors to Paris, with 1.3 million per year. Americans are number two, with 1.2 million (down 24 percent in 2003 over 2002).

**PARIS FACT:** Paris receives on average about 1,800 hours of sunshine per year.

# FLOWER BOWERS

“Cités” with flowers—cozy nooks tucked into unexpected corners

When that classic Broadway musical, “Wonderful Town,” described a particularly delightful corner of New York as “a bit of Páree in Greenwich Village,” it didn’t have Baron Haussmann’s boulevards in mind. Instead, it was summoning up images of all those cozy nooks tucked into unexpected corners of the glamorous City of Light.

Despite the wrecking balls that Haussmann and his successors wielded, many of these picturesque places still remain. In fact, it’s quite possible to fill any number of pleasant days tracking down such charming and unique spots, shaping your search in any way you please.

In my case, I decided to look for flowers. Or, more to the point, small enclaves whose very existence spoke of flowers. Cité des Fleurs, Cité Fleurie and Cité Florale—what glorious-sounding destinations in springtime or on a warm summer day.

I was not disappointed. My first destination was the oldest of the three, the lovely Cité des Fleurs. Located in the 17th arrondissement, not far from lovely Parc Monceau, this long narrow lane runs between the Ave de Clichy and the Rue de La Jonquièrre. You may enter at either end, although its Avenue de Clichy entrance is the easiest to get to, via the Brochant Métro stop. (Note that the street’s gates close for the night at 7:30pm.)

This delightful spot dates from the mid-19th century, when the property’s owners made the crucial decision to divide it into lots. From the outset, this was a planned community, with careful restrictions placed on all the structures throughout. Although the houses did not have to be identical, they had to be compatible in style and size. Each had to have a front garden with flowering trees, while the fences and gates marched along (and still do) in similar size and style. Even the cast-iron vases that top the gateposts are exactly alike and, at least during the early years, displayed only approved kinds of flowers.

Well, that may sound a trifle rigid, but over the course of a century and half, this flower bower has softened its edges, maturing nicely. These attractive old dwellings sport a variety of soft pastel colors as well as pleasantly individualistic architectural details, including unexpected carvings and medallions, ornate windows and some stunning entryways, including a sprinkling of curved double stairways.

Best of all, the trees and gardens have also matured well, providing the kind of oasis that the community’s original planners had in mind. When I was there, only a camera crew shared with me the quiet and beauty of the morning, and we all kept our voices low. It seemed appropriate.

It’s not surprising that many artists came to live and work in this shady, leafy and bucolic spot. Alfred Sisley, who had his studio at No. 27, is perhaps the best known artist to have lived here. But

despite appearances, this innocent-looking spot did not always prove to be a refuge. A plaque at the charming little house at No. 25 tells passersby that during the German Occupation, members of the Resistance worked here, doing the difficult and important work of forging papers. Tragically, the Gestapo caught up with them, executing one (a woman) on the spot and sending the rest to their deaths in concentration camps.

This was an unsettling thought on such a beautiful morning, although not entirely an unexpected one. Charming nooks like this quite naturally attracted a bevy of artists and writers,



many of whom held strong political convictions. The Resistance thrived in such out-of-the way places, and as it turned out, the Cité des Fleurs would not be the only flower bower with a Resistance story to tell.

Crossing to the Left Bank, I next visited the Cité Fleurie, which is located at 65 Boulevard Arago, 13th, right next door to lovely little Square Henri-Cadiou. Take a quick turn through this small park and you will see a sculpture by the late César Domela, who for many years lived at the Cité Fleurie. And then return to Boulevard Arago and the entrance to the Cité itself.

Cité Fleurie grew up over a century ago in what was then a virtual wasteland, on the city’s outskirts. Much like its neighboring artists’ colony at La Ruche, in the 15th, it was built from remnants of a World’s Fair—in this case, the one of 1878. Hauling the materials here from the fair site, the builder constructed a series of rustic half-timbered artists’ studios in two long rows, divided by a long, woody garden.

The results, still enchanting today, soon drew a clientele of appreciative and impoverished artists, including many who would eventually become famous. Both Rodin and Maillol sculpted here, while Modigliani stayed at No. 9 and Gauguin (always impoverished) camped out with a friend.

Anti-Fascism as well as artists thrived in this sheltered spot. As early as the mid-1930s, an anti-Nazi library flourished at No. 18, where one could read literature unobtainable in Germany. During the Occupation the Gestapo got wind of

this subversive cache and shut it down, but only after it had been operating for several years.

After the war, the Cité Fleurie continued its bucolic existence, but its low two-story buildings seemed a waste of space to some insensitive souls, who almost succeeded in demolishing it. Fortunately, its occupants, led by artist Henri Cadiou, tenaciously fought to protect it. At last, in 1973, they succeeded in making Cité Fleurie a protected site—a boon for the entire arrondissement as well as for those visitors fortunate enough to see it. Most appropriately, the park next door is named for the Cité’s tireless protector, Henri Cadiou.

In contrast to both the Cité des Fleurs and Cité Fleurie, my third destination, the Cité Florale (also in the 13th), is a picturesque jumble of tiny streets lined with equally tiny cottages in every imaginable style. This delightful pocket of Paris unexpectedly opens to the visitor from Rue Brillat-Savarin, just off Place de Rungis (an easy walk directly south from Cité Fleurie). My favorite entrance is via Rue des Liserons, which leads to the minute Square des Mimosas and picture-perfect Rue des Iris. Yes, all the streets in this tiny village are named after wildflowers and vines (including Rue des Liserons, or bindweed). The others include glycines (wisteria), volubilis (morning glory) and orchids. All, with the exception of the unfortunate Rue des Orchidées, which has succumbed to a batch of apartment buildings, are a bit of heaven miraculously preserved in the midst of uninspired high-rises.

One of the main reasons this colorful enclave still survives is that the ground beneath it will not support anything much taller and heavier. Built on a low-lying marshy area where the old Bièvre River spread into ponds, this tiny village grew up in the 1920s just inside the no-man’s-land that bordered the old Thiers fortifications. When these came down following World War I, development of the area soon followed. The Cité Florale was certainly the most inspired of this post-war building boom, and soon its winding streets and vine-covered cottages attracted a loyal group of residents, including writers and artists in search of low rents and charm.

Wander through this cluster of tiny streets and cul-de-sacs and soak up the beauty and the peace. No wonder flowers do well here, and one assumes that its residents—and their artistic endeavors—are also thriving.

Last, to cap your day, wander over to nearby Parc Montsouris. An extensive landscape garden with its own romantic treasures, Montsouris provides the perfect setting for any dreams you may now be dreaming. Sit for a while by its lake, while you peacefully contemplate Paris and its hidden flower bowers.

Ah, yes. Another perfect day in Paris.

—By Mary McAuliffe

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## Say Yunks for lunx

By Vivian Thomas

It's a strange name for the hottest new parfumerie in town—lunx. Its creators claim that the word, pronounced yunks, is ancient Greek for the fascination and seduction of scent. And they succeeded in both fascinating and seducing me with this one-of-a-kind shop, a mysterious and shadowy place where sight takes second place to smell, and where unusual and delicious fragrances float in the air.

Outside, lunx is black and austere, but inside, though still unusually dark, it's pure magic. The first thing I noticed on entering was a low rectangular pool in which showy white blossoms and decorative leaves floated. Admiring it, I gradually became aware of the soothing sound of splashing water.

Several groups of customers followed black-clad "vendeuses" through the shop, and although I could hear the murmur of French, English and Japanese, the atmosphere was hushed and serene. Multilingual salespeople are important here because, as I discovered, you need a tour guide to explore lunx. There are no ordinary testers—the shop's five sniffing stations are unique interactive devices. All work differently, and all, as I found when I tried to figure them out for myself, require explanation.

The smiling Japanese speaker soon came to my assistance, explaining each tester and leaving me plenty of sniffing time. Some devices have buttons or levers that activate a light showing where the scented air will emerge. For the body lotions, you lean over silvery metal holders lined with pleated paper cones to get whiffs of the scents. The ten "Eaux de lunx" have a push-button tester that delivers a freshly squirted square of perfumer's paper that lists the name and ingredients.

With its black lacquer furnishings and indirect orange lighting, the shop's design plays cleverly with light and color. In one display case, the ten bottles of Eaux de lunx are illuminated in blue, while the one after-bath lotion, Splash Forte, is outlined in crimson light. The strongest scent, Ether, a heady blend

of myrrh, rose and fragrant woods, comes in a sleek black egg-shaped container that, when held to the light, reveals a flickering blue gleam within.

But the point of a "parfumerie," no matter how high-concept, is not design, packaging or testers, but perfume, and "nose" Olivia Giacobetti has created an astonishing range

of fragrances for lunx. They are astonishing not just in quality (all are based on natural essences, with more emphasis on fruits, spices and fragrant woods than on florals) but in quantity. Including home fragrances, there are over 60 scents.

The lightest Eaux Essentielles contain essences of basil, mint or rose; stronger Eaux come in 10 fragrances, including the luscious, tangerine-scented Eau Latine. In bath gels and body lotions there are combinations like bay leaf/peppercorn and kumquat/sage. And the candles include some that sound good enough to eat, like sugarcane, date and saffron. Most scents are unisex, and the line includes bath products, shampoos and conditioners.

lunx, which opened in March 2003, was a joint effort. While Olivia Giacobetti developed the perfumes, the shop's concept and design are the work of Fabienne Conte-Séviigné and Francis Giacobetti, Olivia's father. In addition, the Japanese firm Shiseido provided financing and product development.

After trying nearly every tester, I left with two items: a shower gel called Graines de Lin, Blé Vert et Riz Sauvage (21E) that makes my shower smell like a sunny summer meadow, and Baobab Body Lotion (34E), a blend of fragrant wood and roses. It scents my skin with a perfume that lasts all day—and every sniff sends me back to the fascinating and seductive world of lunx.

•lunx: 48-50 Rue de l'Université, 7th. Tel: 1-45-44-50-14. Open: Mon-Sat 10:30am-7:30pm.



### ▲ PARIS VISITS ▼

## Mulot the Master

By Roger Grody

The pâtisserie of Gérard Mulot, ensconced just beyond the shadows of stoic St-Sulpice, has been a 6th arrondissement favorite since it opened in 1975. Although the soft-spoken proprietor has long been considered one of Paris' most gifted pâtissiers and boulangers, he's sometimes overshadowed by more avant-garde practitioners such as Pierre Hermé and Sadaharu Aoki, both located within a few blocks of Mulot.

Mulot's shop at the corner of Rue de Seine and Rue Lobineau always seems to emit a warm, inviting glow through large windows shaded by signature white awnings. The extraordinary repertoire of this establishment may escape even some Parisians accustomed to ducking inside for a quick croissant. Many think of Mulot as strictly a purveyor of sweets. However, his breads are very highly regarded—he's particularly admired for his pain de campagne au levain, a type of sourdough. His breads are so well thought of that even Patricia Wells, in her authoritative "The Food Lover's Guide to Paris," introduces Mulot solely in her chapter on boulangeries, without expounding on his more decadent creations.

Inside, where elegance is tempered by rusticity, the shop offers a dazzling array of charlottes, millefeuilles and gâteaux—elevated to high art through glistening ganache and glittering gold leaf—as well as jewel-like pâtés de fruits and chocolates. An entire case is stocked with savory items, and fresh artisanal breads are displayed behind the counter. There's no true café or salon de thé on the premises, but a corner of the store accommodates a few patrons sipping café au lait with their almond croissants, or kouglofs from Mulot's native Alsace.

Bold young pâtissiers are now challenging the old masters over what constitutes a proper Parisian macaron. Unlike the dry, coconut-infused American interpretation, the genuine article is an ethereal creation of powdered almonds, sugar and egg whites. Two pieces of pastry, delicate to the touch but slightly chewy within, are cemented together with butter cream to make the world's

most alluring sandwich cookie. Innovators like Pierre Hermé are known for creating wild flavors (e.g., chestnut with green tea, and white truffle) with varying results. Mulot is more conservative, but among his racks of vibrantly colored macarons are both traditional renditions (e.g., coffee, and pistachio) and more nouvelle concepts, such as a stellar orange-cannelle (cinnamon). All display a subtle hint of marzipan and a cookie constitution that's incredibly fragile without disintegrating in one's hand.

Orange is a flavor Mulot has thoroughly mastered, and his tarte à l'orange is a rare pleasure in a town overflowing with pleasures. The elegant individual tarte, approximately the size of a hockey puck and nearly as heavy—on the scale, not the palate—is nothing short of a marvel. Not overly rich or sugary, its orange custard is potent yet playful, while its crust provides a perfect al dente crunch.

Versatility is as much a Gérard Mulot signature as his éclairs or raisin-studded brioche. One can line up for a pain au chocolat in the morning, pick up a baguette on the way home from the Métro or have the shop cater an event for hundreds (complete with foie gras, smoked salmon and caviar, or a towering holiday croque-monsieur). Although Mulot's customers include French movie stars and sénateurs, the shop can be an invaluable resource for the budget-conscious, who treasure its croque monsieurs, pâtés and quiches for impromptu picnics at Luxembourg Garden or Place St-Sulpice. After all, a meal at Taillevent may not be within everyone's means, but all it takes to experience the baking world's equivalent of a grand Michelin-starred dining room is a mere handful of euros.

•Gérard Mulot: 76 Rue de Seine, 6th. Tel: 1-43-26-85-77. Site: www.gerard-mulot.fr. Open: daily 7am-8pm; closed Wed.



# LITERARY LAIRS

A tour of hotels where now-famous writers once stayed

Hotels can be rated by the comfort of their beds, by the convenience of their location or by their price. But some Parisian hotels have a secret weapon to win admirers: they seduce with history. Occasionally you can see traces of this history from the street. If you walk along Quai Voltaire, for example, you will glimpse a brass plaque on a hotel facade with a poetic quotation from Baudelaire's "Fleurs du Mal." The plaque hooks the imagination: "French symbolist poet Baudelaire once stayed in this plain hotel."

Of course, everyone needs a place to sleep, but here are four "literary" hotels worth checking out even if you're not checking in.

The most famous, the Ritz, is best-known today as the place Diana and Dodi began their fateful August 1997 drive. But the building's history starts in 1705, when Versailles architect Hardouin-Mansart designed this private mansion. It became the townhouse of the Duc de Lauzun et Biron until the Revolution. In 1898, Swiss hotelier César Ritz, famous for creating London's Savoy Hotel, chose this Place Vendôme building as his flagship hotel. In 1934, Coco Chanel took a room here, and she kept it for 30 years. During the Occupation, the Ritz hosted top Nazi officials, tarnishing César's reputation.

But Ritz history soars at the Liberation, all because of a writer. Call it unerring good taste, or just a fine nose for a drink. Ernest Hemingway doesn't have a commemorative plaque on the hotel's facade; instead, he has a whole bar named after him. Hemingway staged his epic "liberation" of the Ritz wine cellar in 1944. Leaving his driver waiting outside, he sauntered into the bar and ordered an historic 73 dry martinis, to be shared with his military companions—Hemingway was a war correspondent for Collier's, though he had such an entourage with him, most people assumed he was a general. After the Liberation, "Papa" frequently returned to the Ritz. His friend Marlene Dietrich would sit on the edge of a Ritz bathtub, singing while Hemingway shaved. It was at the Ritz that Papa proposed to his fourth wife, journalist Mary Welsh. And it was in the Ritz bar that Hemingway often met his old Paris friend and fellow correspondent, Janet Flanner, who spent two decades living in the second of our literary hotels, this one on the Left Bank.

Flanner first came to Paris in 1922, accompanying her lover, American novelist Solita Solano. She wanted to be a writer, but she was too busy partying to write. Her big chance came when friends invited her to contribute to a publication they were starting in New York. The magazine was *The New Yorker*, in which she created the fortnightly "Letter from Paris." Her classic journalistic style helped defined the excellence of the magazine. She later wrote: "We were a literary lot. Each of us aspired to become a famous

writer as soon as possible."

Flanner's favorite café for meeting friends like the young Hemingway was the Deux Magots. She lived just down the street, in a nondescript hotel that is now the Hôtel Saint-Germain-des-Prés. She lived here from 1922 until World War II. Henry Miller also stayed here briefly in the 30s. Walking by the hotel today, you'll see no plaque to commemorate these literary expats. Instead, there's a marker for Auguste Comte (1798-1857), philosopher and founder of Positivism. Comte is the father of sociology and this was his home.



Comte's elegant apartment, like many 18th-century buildings in the area, gradually devolved into a hotel with tiny rooms. The hotel now caters to tourists rather than to impoverished artists and writers, but the rooms haven't gotten any bigger (though plumbing and decor have improved). Writer Solita Solano explained the hotel's original charms in this way: "It cost a dollar a day ... our ideal, all-purpose hotel—no domesticity, privacy for work and study, all delights free and within walking distance."

The delights of Paris "within walking distance" have made Hôtel Saint-Germain-des-Prés a premium historic hotel area. Some of these hotels are converted from 17th-century private mansions. Some have moonlighted as embassies. And at least one, L'Hôtel on Rue des Beaux-Arts, was originally a 19th-century "house of pleasure," a *Directoire* "pavillon d'amour" where the wealthy arranged trysts with their mistresses. The house eventually became an ordinary hotel; today, its history revolves around its most famously tragic guest, a man who registered at the hotel as Sebastian Melmoth. The mysterious Melmoth was none other than the exiled Oscar Wilde.

Wilde arrived in Paris in 1900, his health and creativity broken by a brutal prison sentence. He had become more infamous for his trial than respected for his brilliant writing career, which included "The Importance of Being Earnest" and "The Picture of Dorian Gray." Wilde settled here on the first floor until his untimely death at age 46. As he lay dying, Wilde glared at the walls of his hotel room: "My wallpaper and I are fighting

a duel to the death," he said. "One or the other of us has to go."

These days, the wallpaper might annoy him less: the hotel was redesigned a few years ago and Wilde's former room is now decorated in the attitudinal fin-de-siècle extravagance. The hotel has also been a home-away-from-home for Argentine fabulist Jorge Luis Borges and the Rolling Stones—but no one recorded what they thought about the wallpaper.

At our final historic hotel, wallpaper was the least of the building's problems. After a glorious beginning in 1480, a mansion built for the Duc d'O at 9 Rue Gît-le-Cœur went through a debilitating 500-year decline, ending up as a 1950s subsistence-level hotel. Here, beneath a sign that said only "Hôtel Vin Café," Allen Ginsberg stumbled into living accommodations on his 1957 European tour. As his reputation skyrocketed in the U.S., Ginsberg spent 10 months living in this flea-bitten hotel, sharing his sagging bed with lover Peter Orlovsky and friend Gregory Corso (who eventually moved into his own room under the eaves). The proprietor of the tiny hotel, Mme Rachou, loved artists and accepted the most paranoid of junkies like William Burroughs, who moved in upstairs from Ginsberg.

In 1963, Mme Rachou sold the hotel; the next owners burned everything the Beats had left in their "Beat Hotel." It was only in the early 80s, after current owner Claude Odillard bought the hotel, now renamed Relais-Hôtel du Vieux Paris, that Beat history was restored to pride of place. "The place was filthy," says Mme Odillard, describing the ruin she bought. She gradually transformed it into the intimate four-star jewel you can visit today. As she renovated, she learned that American poets had lived in her building. She went to her local bookshop and demanded a copy of Burroughs' "Naked Lunch." "You won't like it," said the bookseller. "But I must read it," she told him. And she did.

Over the next decade, she met many of the Beats. If asked, she'll show you her visitor's book, signed by Ginsberg, Burroughs and Corso when they revisited their old haunt. Visiting last in 1997, Corso wrote here: "Where once rats [ran] from the cellar to the street, so did we poets ... the sun was as bright and happy for us as for the rats ... [today] my attic room, though changed, still shows St-Chapelle."

Which is exactly the point of these historic hotels—of course they change, but their stories remain for us to savor, just like the view from their windows.

—By Lisa Pasold

•Hôtel Ritz Paris: 15 Place Vendôme, 1st. Tel: 1-43-16-30-70. Site: [www.ritzparis.com](http://www.ritzparis.com).

•Hôtel Saint-Germain-des-Prés: 36 Rue Bonaparte, 6th. Tel: 1-43-26-00-19. Site: [www.hotel-paris-saint-germain.com](http://www.hotel-paris-saint-germain.com).

•L'Hôtel: 13 Rue des Beaux-Arts, 6th. Tel: 1-44-41-99-00. Site: [www.l-hotel.com](http://www.l-hotel.com).

•Relais-Hôtel du Vieux Paris: 9 Rue Gît-le-Cœur, 6th. Tel: 1-43-26-00-15. Site: [www.vieux-paris.com](http://www.vieux-paris.com).

of architectural mediocrity that is bristling with mirrored-glass skyscrapers and studded with concrete apartment bunkers. The saving graces of this Moscow-meets-Manhattan satellite city are the absence of cars, and recent landscaping.

I queued under the Grand Arch in the windy vortex comically termed a "piazza," and then rode to the roof in a glass bubble elevator. As I did so, I remembered back to the late 80s, when I watched the viewing deck being poured into place at a height of over 100 meters. Building the arch required much engineering wizardry. Arch designer Johan Otto von Spreckelsen adroitly poised his creation 6.30 degrees askew, mirroring the skew of the Louvre's Cour Carré without blocking the Power Axis. In theory a superhuman bowler could roll a ball through the arch's wind-tunnel piazza to the grubby panes of Pei's pyramid.

A nitpicker might carp about the arch's smog-stained Carrara cladding, the threadbare carpets inside or the prison-camp aesthetics of the rooftop terrace. Even arch devotees cannot help noting that the suspended canvas windbreaks called "Nuages" look less like the hovering clouds Von Spreckelsen had envisioned than a tattered and stained Bedouin tent. They simply don't work. Wind or not, the arch is standing up to time's weathering, and it seems a pity that Von Spreckelsen died before it was completed.

A lesser archway, this one clad with sparkling dark granite, graces the entrance to the Bastille Opera at the historic axis' eastern end. Of all Tonton's arch-follies, it has aged the worst and looks like a shabby, overweight old cocotte with a hairnet. The netting is there to keep the shoddily anchored gray granite cladding from falling onto passersby.

In a rush to make a July 13, 1989, bicentennial celebration deadline, but desirous to appear fair this time around, Mitterrand held a "blind" competition for the Bastille Opera project. Everyone in Paris soon knew that the president's choice was remote controlled by associates who mistakenly believed they'd identified star-architect Richard Meier's opera house mockup. The fruit of this cock-up is Canadian-Uruguayan Carlos Ott's \$350 million behemoth. It measures nearly half a mile (800 meters) around and 150 feet (48 meters) high. "People don't like my opera house because they say it's ugly, it's fat, it doesn't have any gold or red velvet inside, and it looks like a factory," a red-faced Ott told me in 1989. "And all those things to me are compliments!"

As I bustled into the behemoth with droves of elegant opera aficionados and enjoyed a tear-jerking performance of "La Bohème," I had to admit that the main auditorium is a formidable resonating chamber (Ott had help designing it). The blue-gray granite walls, oak flooring and black velour seats that seemingly disappear when the lights go down are as handsome and functional today as the building's outside was, is and always will be ridiculous.

After a 10-minute walk further east I came upon Mitterrand's unsung Ministry of Finance complex. It's Europe's longest continuous build-

ing, seemingly left over from Stalin's USSR, and goosesteps in an "L" from the Gare de Lyon to the Seine at Bercy. I remember the spiel co-architects Paul Chemetov and Borja Huidobro gave the press in the late 80s. The Bercy Métroviaduct, they said, with its double set of white stone arcades, inspired their concept. Detractors dubbed the \$500 million trifle "futuristic," "Stalinesque" and "nightmarish." It's equipped with a moat and a cubical citadel of glass for private ministerial meetings. The color-coded signage is devised to get drones through a mind-boggling 35 kilometers of corridors, a hive buzzing with 6,000 pen pushers, honeycombed with identical, modular offices. When I first toured the building in 1989 my embarrassed PR guide lost her way and had to call for help. Little has changed, though. Nowadays Bercy is smog-stained and seems less futuristic or "intelligent," as it was once called (meaning 100 percent computerized). I walked through it now and was comforted to learn that the air-conditioning still turns off when windows are opened. In-house mail continues to arrive via something called "Teledoc," a ceiling-mounted electronic shuttle system. With synthesized voices the elevators tell visitors what floor they're on. And countless people still get lost.

While tanking up on a restorative dose of caffeine at a café outside the moat, I asked the barkeep how the fortress complex had changed the neighborhood. Local businesses are profiting, he chortled. Real estate values have risen. "And who cares if it could be in Moscow?" he asked, jerking his thumb eastwards. "The TGB (Très Grande Bibliothèque) is worse!"

Upstream I crossed to the Left Bank at Tolbiac and stood before the Incan plinth on which the National Library rises amid a forest of construction cranes. Local redevelopment is still underway. The library's catchy official name is "Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Site François Mitterrand." But everyone calls this \$1 billion-plus marvel the TGB.

"Can kitsch be dangerous?" I wondered. I skittered in the windswept shadows of four 300-foot towers of glass splayed like open books framing an expanse of slippery, buckling tropical planks three football fields long. A half-hour search among caged holly trees rattling in the wind revealed an entrance—luckily I'd been here before and vaguely remembered the way. The site's hidden heart is a glassed-in subterranean garden the length of two football fields, accessed via a tilted, moving sidewalk. Like the caged hollies, the gardens' handsome red pine trees double as contemporary bondage art, girded by steel cables so they won't crash through the windows.

Wind is not the only problem at the TGB. I still haven't gotten used to genius architect Dominique Perrault's underground reading rooms, or his cleverness in storing books in glass towers, where retrofitted wooden panels block daylight. The original plan was worse: conveyor belts were to cross an open courtyard, exposing books to rain and sun. I stood now in the western atrium and had plenty of time to take in the view of leaking ceilings and plastic buckets extending almost 700 feet east. Hours can go by while you

get a computerized pass then summon a book from a tower into a reading room half a mile away. Best of all is trying to exit: if your returned loan hasn't been scanned back into the system, as happened to me, you can't get out. Red lights flashed. The turnstile wouldn't turn. Librarians and security guards leapt into action. Then Big Brother pushed a button somewhere and finally I was free to go.

My explorations of Mitterrand's megalomania had a surprisingly happy ending at La Villette in the 19th arrondissement, four "grands projets" in one. Three times the size of the Pompidou Center, the old meatpacking plant west of the Ourcq Canal has been the world's biggest science museum since it opened in 1986. No beef here, I reflected as I hoofed through this Emerald City of hi-tech. Cast as the Wizard of Oz, Mitterrand hijacked but couldn't ruin the project after drubbing Giscard d'Estaing, and his name is writ large on a bronze plaque in the cavernous main hall full of electronic gizmos.

I crossed the canal and found the doors open to the reconverted 1860s glass-and-ironwork cattle auction hall. Now an expo and concert venue, the Grande Halle evokes Baltard's dearly departed Les Halles, and, as with Giscard d'Estaing's equally successful Musée d'Orsay and Institut du Monde Arabe, try as he might, not even Mitterrand could ruin it.

Not content with surrogate fatherhood at La Villette, Tonton commissioned the Cité de la Musique, a silly name for the national music conservatory and instrument museum. Architect Christian de Portzamparc subsequently won the prestigious Pritzker Prize and is perhaps the sole Frenchman to have fulfilled Mitterrand's hope of global glory. He also designed classy Café Beaubourg; its counterpart here felt like a grand piano turned inside out. Like the other "grands projets," de Portzamparc's compound shows precocious signs of gritty wear. The superfluous metal superstructures that metaphorically "bridge" the abutting Périphérique beltway and the bathroom-tiled facades seem hopelessly mired in a post-modernist aesthetic. Yet the curving indoor "street" playfully evokes an inner ear, and the museum's displays and live music are a harmonious delight.

Before heading home I took a turn around the Parc de la Villette, a deconstructionist's dream that its American architect Bernard Tschumi termed "an urban park for the 21st century," meaning it rejects the notion of a refuge. His "discontinuous building" is a sequence of 26 whimsical "garden follies" painted fire engine red, set along cobbled footpaths, lawns and the canal. A refuge from the city it isn't: cars thundered by on the beltway, riverboats chuffed past.

The follies merge jungle gym, firehouse and lifeguard station. Despite "keep off" signs, kids gleefully scaled the wheel rims of Claes Oldenburg's outsized "Buried Bicycle" sculpture. Others hunted frogs in a bamboo-stippled marsh, unaware of their prey's resemblance to a certain former president. It struck me that few of those happy children had lived through Mitterrand's murky reign, and probably not a one would recognize his name.

PICK OF THE MONTH

**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). Seduced by the ever-changing effects of light—especially on the coast of Normandy—Jongkind’s vision and technique influenced the development of the Impressionist movement. As you look at all these astonishing paintings (now “worth” a fortune to investors), it is hard to believe that Jongkind died in poverty and despair. Best time for a quiet visit: Thurs evenings, 7-9pm. •Musée d’Orsay. Until Sept 9. Site: [www.musee-orsay.fr](http://www.musee-orsay.fr).

MUST SEE

**Hopper**

Edward Hopper’s Paris work is shown here. That is, all he painted during his brief stay in Paris from 1906 to 1910: moody views of the Seine, the little streets he knew and loved, and poignant “after-thoughts” of the Paris he yearned for when he was back in the U.S. This is an appealing, documented show. •Musée d’Art Américain, Giverny. Until July 7. Site: [www.maag.org](http://www.maag.org).

**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—even the American Robert Fulton’s 1800 design for Napoleon, the original “Nautilus,” is given a place. •Palais de Chaillot. Until Aug 23. Site: [www.musee-marine.fr](http://www.musee-marine.fr).

**Picasso/Ingrès**

“In other times,” writes Le Parisien’s Hubert Lizé, “an army of lawyers would perhaps have accused Picasso of plagiarism.” For Picasso did indeed “copy” Ingrès. All the luscious stuff of this expo explores that adoration he had for Ingrès, and how he twisted and turned his idol’s work to his own ends. Quite simply beautiful. •Musée Picasso. Until June 21. Site: [www.musee-picasso.fr](http://www.musee-picasso.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. One of the many surprises presented here is James Montgomery Flagg’s self-portrait, which is the original of the famous “I want you for the U.S. army” poster. •Musée du Luxembourg. Until July 25. Site: [www.expo-moi.com](http://www.expo-moi.com).

**Francis Bacon**

“Le Sacré et le Profane” (the sacred and the profane): this startling expo presents 42 major works by Francis Bacon (1909-1992), including

his much-lauded triptych. This is the fiercely atheist Bacon’s unnerving variations on religious themes. •Musée Maillol. Until June 30. Site: [www.museemaillol.com](http://www.museemaillol.com).

**Hairy Mammoths**

Titled “Au Temps des Mammouths,” this splendid expo traces the history of the hairy mammoths, which became extinct just 4,000 years ago. •Museum National d’Histoire Naturelle. Until Jan 2005. Site: [www.mnhn.fr](http://www.mnhn.fr).

**Joan Miró**

Barcelona-born Miró (1893-1983) is shown here with 240 works—paintings, drawings, collages—from 1917 to 1934 (from his Paris period). Touchingly direct, each piece is so perfectly constructed in color, form and content that one leaves the expo captivated by Miró’s vision. •Centre Pompidou. Until June 28. Site: [www.centrepompidou.fr](http://www.centrepompidou.fr).

WORTH A VISIT

**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](http://www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com).

**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](http://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. “Revealing the Invisible” is the title of this expo; 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](http://www.musee-moyenage.fr).

**Treasures from China**

“People of the Mists, Mountains and Rivers”: more wondrous works from the museums of Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Nanjing and Liaoning—over 100 12th- to 19th-century paintings and many archaeological pieces. •Grand Palais. Until June 30. Site: [www.rmn.fr](http://www.rmn.fr).

SPECIAL EVENTS

**Liberty Week**

A week of Franco-American memories: the French contribution in liberating the new “Americans”

Petites Notes, continued from page 2

are converted into a beach. Some talk about the bicycle paths that have been built, but Parisians have not significantly increased their bike riding (and the paths were originally the idea of the prior administration). There are more trash cans in the city, and more citations for dog poop are being given out, but the city doesn’t appear to be any cleaner. The list of things that haven’t happened during his first three years goes on, but, overall, Parisians generally approve of Mayor Delanoë.

**Garnier Grand Foyer**

After a year of renovation, the sumptuous “grand foyer” of the Opéra Garnier, perhaps the most spectacular opera in the world, has reopened to the public. The renovated area is where opera-goers gather during intermissions. Researchers say the renovation has restored the grand foyer to exactly what it looked like at its opening in January 1875, except the lamps and chandeliers are electric rather than gas. A good part of the ubiquitous gilding was replaced; murals by Baudry were scraped clean of soot; cracks were sealed; and varnish was stripped and reapplied. Even the seat cushions and curtains were cleaned and fireproofed. The results are spectacular and can be seen on guided tours (Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm, 6E).

from English rule, and the American participation in liberating Europe from Nazi rule. There will be fireworks, dancing in the streets and other activities in addition to the official D-Day commemoration. The Eiffel Tower will be twinkling in red, white and blue to evoke the flags of France and the USA. •June 2-6, throughout Paris. Info: 1-48-78-24-10.

**Jazz in the Park**

Free, big-name jazz concerts. •Parc Floral, Bois de Boulogne. June 5-July 25. Site: [www.parcfloraldeparis.com](http://www.parcfloraldeparis.com).

**Fête de la Musique**

Paris, all-day/all-night musical celebration of the summer solstice. Musicians, bands and dancers. •All over the city. June 21. Site: [www.fetedelamusique.culture.fr](http://www.fetedelamusique.culture.fr).

PLANNING AHEAD

**Bastille Day**

Parades, fireworks, concerts and dancing in the streets in commemoration of the 1789 Revolution. •Celebrations all over the city. July 14.

**Tour de France**

Cyclists arrive on the Champs-Élysées after their cross-country ordeal. •July 20. Site: [www.letour.fr](http://www.letour.fr).

**Paris-Plage**

The banks of the Seine will be closed to traffic, and sand, palm trees, entertainment and activities will be offered to the public. This is the third year of Paris-Plage, an event Parisians have come to love. •Mid-July to mid-August.