

Americans Return
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Pillow Talk

Euro Aug 12: .816
Euro June 15: .822
Rain Days: 13
High Temp: 70°F/21°C
Low Temp: 53°F/12°C
Nat'l Holidays: none

PARIS

n o t e s

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BETTER BAGUETTES

By Deborah Baldwin

In a city with a taste for bread, a new wave of master bakers is raising the baguette bar

For years, one of the worst-kept secrets in the 7th arrondissement was the star attraction of Jean-Luc Poujauran, whose bedroom eyes and 10pm-shadow drew customers—mainly women—from miles away. When Poujauran vanished last year from behind the fig and hazelnut flutes at his raspberry-pink-faced bakeshop, it was easy to imagine him off filming the baker's equivalent of "Chocolat," a steamy tale of talent and ambition unfolding among flour sacks and yeast cakes in a vraie Parisian boulangerie.

Poujauran wasn't gone—more on his future plans momentarily—but he picked the wrong time to go underground.

With two new guidebooks devoted to Paris bakeries out this spring and interest in baguettes at furious new levels, this has been the year of the boulanger.

More to the point, there has never been a better time to shop for French bread.

In 1983, when the food writer Patricia Wells set out to find "an honest, fresh baguette" in Paris, she was able to round up 10 sources—barely. "It's not easy," she noted at the time.

What a difference 21 years make. Today every arrondissement has its share of destination bakeries, from the 5th, home of the innovative baker Eric Kayser (8 Rue Monge), to the 14th, home of Pierre Thilloux, owner of the tiny Fournée d'Augustine (96 Rue Raymond-Losserand), who at 23 bagged the City's Grand Prix de la Baguette de la Ville de Paris (an award given for the best baguette in the city) this year.

Armed with Wells' list, I made my first baguette tour two decades ago and have been going back for more ever since. This spring I retraced my steps, my horizons expanded by the great French bread historian Steven L. Kaplan—an American who divides his time between Cornell University and Paris—and a dog-eared copy of his thoughtful guidebook, "Cherchez le Pain" (Plon, 2004, in French only, 15E in Paris bookstores).

Luckily, few things are more enjoyable than wandering around Paris, baguette in hand, burning calories while consuming them. At the oddly

named Au Duc de la Chapelle (32 Rue Tristan-Tzara, a cul-de-sac at the northern edge of the 18th), I bit into a nuanced rye bread by Thierry Meunier, making note of its potential role as a foil for ham and cheese. As if to underscore the increasingly global reach of Paris' rising young bakers, Mr. Meunier was not at home: he was preparing to train a group of bakers in Tokyo.

On a nondescript street at the foot of the Butte-aux-Cailles (2 Rue Wurtz, 13th), Laurent Dûchene's boulangerie-pâtisserie beckoned, its window a frothy showcase of all that art can effect with a few simple ingredients. I tore off the

across the city, with distinct clusters in the less-well-heeled 13th, 14th and 18th arrondissements. Perhaps working-class Parisians demand that at least one element of their daily life be utterly correct. For whatever reason, near one 18th-arrondissement Métro stop (Abbesses) alone you'll find Au Levain du Marais (48 Rue Caulaincourt), Boulangerie Laurent (63 Rue Caulaincourt), Grenier à Pain (38 Rue des Abbesses), Au Levain d'Antan (6 Rue des Abbesses) and Coquelicot (24 Rue des Abbesses)—for starters.

Like so many great movements, the revival of bread has not only a devoted historian in Kaplan but its own leaders and political partisans. In keeping with the times, this movement is also increasingly "médiatique." A lavish event was held in May to celebrate the other new guidebook, "Le Guide des Boulangeries de Paris," by Augustin Paluel-Marmont and Michel de Rovira (Les Editions de l'If, 14.5E in Paris bookstores), who took the measure of the baguettes, ceiling frescoes and croissant flakiness in hundreds of bakeries.

Gathering for champagne, some of the featured bakers stood elbow to elbow, perhaps for the first time, surrounded by crusty loaves and delicate canapés.

In one corner was Frédéric Lalos, a "MOF," or Meilleur Ouvrier de France (tops in his field), who, together with a partner, is the proprietor of three Quartier du Pain boulangeries (among them, 74 Rue St-Charles, 15th) and a 12-page press kit. In another stood Dominique Saïbron, whose Boulanger de Monge (123 Rue Monge, 5th) supplies baguettes to Joël Robuchon's new restaurant, l'Atelier.

And in the middle of the room was a shrine to Poilâne, which sent no one to attend but was represented by an elegantly set table, each element—from the candelabra to the napkins—made of bread.

Lionel Poilâne, who died in an accident two years ago, inherited his father's bakery (8 Rue du Cherche-Midi) in the 6th arrondissement and went on to produce its traditional country breads on an indus- (continued on page 7)



crusty nose of an ivory-colored baguette before I was more than steps away.

In a working-class street market one Sunday morning, a stunning 40 customers were waiting for a chance to shuffle one by one into Le Pain au Naturel (5 Place d'Aligre, 12th), where Michel Moisan makes rustic-looking bread by manipulating fermentation times in an ultra-modern manner.

And in an overlooked patch of the 11th (43 Rue de Montreuil), I returned to one of my old favorites, l'Autre Boulange, whose owner, Michel Cousin, has stubbornly refused to alter a recipe that is equal parts dark stone-ground flours and old-fashioned manual labor.

Searching for geo-boulangerie patterns, I found great bakeries almost evenly distributed

Since we put our Beds Hotel Guide up on the Paris Notes website (www.parisnotes.com, passwords to the subscribers-only section below), it has been downloaded close to 10,000 times. It, along with our Bites Restaurant Guide, has become very popular with our readers. We wanted to do something a little different with these guides to make them easier for you to find just the right hotel or restaurant. I'm going to go out on a limb here and say I think we succeeded beautifully—they're the best guides out there.

Our goal with the guides was not to cover every hotel and restaurant in Paris. Rather, we aimed to narrow down the list to the point that it was manageable as well as to make groups within the list that would help you zero in on what you were specifically looking for—or to help you get more specific. In PDF format, these guides can be downloaded to your hard drive and opened with Adobe Reader. Remember that PDFs can be cut-and-pasted, as well as printed.

That said, I'm happy to tell you that we have updated the Beds guide and it is now available on the website. I would also suggest that you click through the hundreds of hotels for which we provide you links on our Hotel Links page. I hope you find both these resources useful.

It won't be long before our Bites guide will be updated. A lot has changed in the year or so since the first edition. And if the guides are not enough to convince you to renew your subscription, you might want to download the PDF copy of the Musée d'Orsay's museum guide available on our home page. This is the first of what we hope to make a whole "brochure bin" of great visits in Paris—information to have before you go.

—Mark Eversman, Editor
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rédaction

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Americans Return

In 2003, about 75 million foreigners visited France, making it the most visited country in the world—as it has been for years. The closest rival is Spain, with about 52 million visitors. These statistics for 2003, which were released over the summer, should be good news for the country, but in actuality they have tourist officials worried. The 2003 numbers were down two million from 2002 (after 9/11, one would have thought that 2002 numbers would have been lower than those for 2003 as tourism began to come back). According to the French bureau of tourism, three million Americans visited France in 2002 versus 2.4 million in 2003 (for comparison, in 1996, there were 2.6 million; in 2000, there were 3.8 million). Should officials be worried? Well, when you consider that Americans, who represent a large portion of the tourism decline, spend more (with the exception of the Japanese) and stay longer than all other tourists, the answer is yes. In Paris, which always feels the loss of American visitors more than the rest of the country, last year was particularly un-American. That meant hundreds of millions of lost tourist revenue. But, while there are no official statistics yet, there is some good news based on early projections for 2004. The president of the Office de Tourisme de Paris, Jean-Marc Janailac, recently announced that the bureau is estimating that there are 10 percent more Americans in Paris this year than last (some businesses are saying 20 percent).

Forum Follies

Last month we told you about the contest for the Forum des Halles/Les Halles renovation project—possibly the biggest building project in Paris in 10 years. Soon after we went to print, the "discussions" about the future of the project became so heated, the opinion so mixed and Mayor Delanoë so afraid of making a political mistake, that a planned June decision for a winner was put off until the fall—and, possibly, much longer. The four architectural designs proposed by Jean Nouvel, Winy Maas, Rem Koolhaas and David Mangin failed to enamor the public, and the mayor, realizing he was heading toward a possible political catastrophe (his presidential aspirations are no longer a secret), decided not to decide which project would get the nod. Now what? The general opinion by all groups concerned—resident associations, environmental groups, the architects, the city council and Parisians in general—was that the decision could wait. But, the mayor knew it was not just a question of which project to select. He admitted he was not sold on any one of the four designs: "There is good

and bad in each project." He has asked the architects to rethink their designs, and now there is discussion of a public referendum. This is to say, not much will happen to the only-30-year-old Forum des Halles anytime soon. That will give you time to visit a project exhibition center located in the Forum on the third level (so complicated is the inside of the Forum that the best directions we can give you are that the exhibition is near the indoor pool). The center is open: Tue, Thur, Fri, 12-7pm; Wed, Sat, 10am-7pm. There you will find mock-ups of each design.

Letters and Manuscripts

Joining the ranks of Paris' 130 plus museums—from the Louvre to the lock museum—is a new entry. The Musée des Lettres et Manuscrits (8 Rue de Nesle, 5th; open Wed, 1-9pm; Thur to Sun, 10am-6pm, 8E) is the work of Gérard Lhéritier, a "passionné d'histoire." Located in an old building with exposed stone walls and painted beams, the museum presents hundreds of documents, including personal and official letters, postcards and just about every other form of document on paper with historical relevance (mostly French-related). There are communications from Chagall, Rossini, Napoleon, Miró, de Maupassant, Saint-Exupéry and many more. Some highlights include a letter from Eisenhower announcing the German surrender to world leaders, a worksheet for "The Marriage of Figaro" by Mozart and mathematical calculations written by Einstein.

Protected Buildings

There are approximately 80,000 buildings in Paris. Six hundred of them are classified as "monuments historiques." That is, they are protected by the City and can never be touched, unless for renovation, and then only after lengthy research and a gauntlet of regulations. Nor can anything new within a 500-meter perimeter be built around them. There is also a list of 1,312 buildings and historical sites in the city that are protected as part of the "inventaire supplémentaire des monuments historiques." These sites can't be torn down and they don't have the 500-meter perimeter. Despite all these protections, the City doesn't feel it has enough safeguards in place to preserve the historical side of its architectural inventory. So, it is creating a new classification, "parcelles architecturales," for another 3,500 buildings and sites (including streets and neighborhoods) that will prohibit the destruction of a site. Another 4,000 buildings and sites will receive yet another classification, "signalements," which will signal developers who (continued on page 8)

• PARIS •
B I T E S
By Rosa Jackson



I had disgracefully forgotten my best friend's birthday and needed to make it up to her, fast. A splash-out at the Ritz would have been just the thing, but a brief look at my bank balance told me this wasn't that kind of month. Luckily there are restaurants in Paris like Le Dôme du Marais.

Lying somewhere between casual and formal, bistro and haute, **Le Dôme du Marais** (not to be confused with the legendary Montparnasse seafood restaurant Le Dôme) seems perfectly at ease with its identity. The staff wouldn't turn a hair if you showed up in jeans, but should you feel the urge to mark the occasion with finery, the octagonal, domed dining room would provide a stunning backdrop. The building predates the French Revolution and once served as the auction room for state-owned pawnbrokers; today it has been done up (but thankfully not overdone) in burgundy and gilt, with tables dressed in sparkling white linen.

It says a lot about this dining room that on a sunny July day we were happy to be inside—Le Dôme also has a glassed-in courtyard, but no outdoor terrace. So happy, in fact, that the first thing we ordered was a half-bottle of Billecart-Salmon rosé champagne for 27E. This came with iced flutes that, though technically not the correct way to serve champagne, added to the festive feel of our meal. I sensed that S. was starting to forgive me, though there was a moment of tension when an over-zealous young waiter removed her glass before she had emptied it. I informed the maître d', who promptly appeared with a fresh glass (we did get a bit of a glare from the young waiter, who had apparently been reprimanded).

Owner-chef Pierre Lecoutre loves to work with seasonal produce, and our early summer meal was a perfect example. Not wanting too heavy a meal, we shared a gratinée of mussels to start, which for 9E was a substantial dish of shelled moulles de bouchot in a lightly curried cream sauce. (The old French rule that mussels should be eaten only in months with an "r" is now considered out-of-date, and mussels taste delicious in summer.)

S. stuck with the fishy theme by ordering the fillet de courbine, a fish that in English has the unfortunate name of "meagre." The chef later told me that he offers this dish only for three weeks of the year, when this very seasonal white fish is available—at other

times of year he uses sea bass. The far-from-meager portion came with a cream sauce flavored with spicy chorizo sausage (I thought it could have used a bit more punch), and fresh little broad beans that also have a brief season in the market. I couldn't resist ordering the saddle of lamb with crushed coffee beans, one of those combinations that you sense will be either a revelation or a disaster. Fortunately it was the former—the lamb rosy and meltingly soft, the coffee adding a distinctive but not overwhelming note. Brightly colored, lightly cooked spring vegetables set off the brown tones of the dish.

We nearly had to arm-wrestle over who would order the tempting-sounding froissé praline chocolat, until I remembered why we were there and graciously claimed I would be happier with the strawberry dacquoise. As it turned out, both of us were delighted—especially as we ate off each other's plates, savoring what was more of a chocolate sculpture than a dessert, and the gleaming fresh strawberries between ethereal layers of almond meringue.

This meal cost a little more than 100E, but for once I didn't come out fuming about euro inflation—we definitely had our money's worth, in terms of food and the special-occasion experience. I'll be keeping this one up my sleeve to avert future friendship crises.

•Le Dôme du Marais: 53 Rue des Francs-Bourgeois, 4th. Tel: 1-42-74-54-17. Closed Sun and Mon.

With La Régalade in new hands (apparently successfully), diehard foodies have been mourning the temporary absence of Yves Camdeborde on the Paris restaurant scene. Thankfully, many others now share his generous approach—and his suppliers. Near the Luxembourg garden, the wine bar **Les Papilles** turns out to be a source of the same piggy delights—terrines, saucisson, tripe sausage, blood sausage, the works—served at La Régalade. Basically a wine shop with as many tables as possible squeezed into a long, narrow space, Les Papilles also has the advantage of a generous wine policy: you pick the bottle you want off the shelves, then pay a 6E corkage fee to drink it on the spot. Compare this to the mark-up in most bistros and you will be leaving in a tipsier state than you intended (which is exactly what I did).

The building predates the French Revolution and once served as the auction room for state-owned pawnbrokers

Every day Les Papilles also offers a full menu for 28E with a generous southwestern touch. My friend H., who was visiting from London for one night, opted for this to get his full dose of French grub, while I chose the charcuterie board and a salad of arugula, sun-dried tomatoes and parmesan in an attempt to counterbalance this pork-fest.

There is nothing quite as awful as bad charcuterie, and there is nothing quite as marvelous as good charcuterie—this wooden board laden with sausages and pâté provided ample proof of that. I never would have guessed that cold blood sausage could taste so good. Then again, the exceptionally fruity white vin de pays from the Ardèche, sniffed out by the owners (14E plus corkage), was putting me in an awfully good mood.

H.'s chilled cauliflower soup came in a big white tureen, while his tendron de veau (one of my favorite, fatty but flavorful cuts) with fork-crushed potatoes appeared in a cast-iron pot. His dessert, a small glass of apricot bavarois, was minimalist but delicious, while I ordered a bitter campari jelly similar to one I had eaten at La Régalade. My only, minor complaint was the very tight seating, which meant the backs of our chairs were touching those of our neighbors. There is a more spacious table at the back for a small group.

Les Papilles is also an épicerie, which means you can leave not only with a bottle of wine but with little food gifts for yourself or others. And the staff couldn't be friendlier.

•Les Papilles: 30 Rue Gay-Lussac, 5th. Tel: 1-43-25-20-79. Closed Sun.

PARIS FACT: If you would like to rent the space under the pyramid at the Louvre for a party, you can do it on a Tue or Thur evening for just around \$70,000.

PARIS FACT: According to the 2000 census in the U.S., 8.3 million Americans consider themselves to be of French descent. This is the 9th largest nationality represented (Germans are the most populous, with 43 million).

PARIS FACT: The Paris Zoo, located in the Bois de Vincennes (east side of Paris), opened in 1934. It takes up 35 acres and welcomes 750,000 visitors a year. It has an inventory of 900 animals from 80 species. To keep the zoo running, there are 130 employees.

ST-AIGNAN SURVIVES

A tiny chapel on the Ile de la Cité makes it through nine centuries

To begin with, St-Aignan isn't easy to find. Following small clues, I stood before the locked gate at 19 Rue des Ursins (4th) and peered inside, trying to find some evidence of a chapel. But all I could see was an empty courtyard. No sign of a chapel anywhere, not even a tiny one.

Still, I knew there was a 12th-century chapel somewhere in the neighborhood, one with a particularly interesting pedigree. Back in the early 1120s, almost nine centuries ago, a brilliant ecclesiastical and political figure by the name of Etienne de Garlande had built it virtually as an adjunct to his house, in what then was the cloister of Notre Dame. Garlande, who was archdeacon of the cathedral, had risen through political ranks as well, to become chancellor to the king. Not surprisingly, the chapel of St-Aignan, which joined a cluster of other churches and chapels on this eastern end of the Ile de la Cité, was all that a man of his power and wealth could make it—a tiny masterpiece of early Parisian architecture. And now, with the passing of the centuries, it had become a rare survivor from a distant age.

I knew something else about St-Aignan. Rather daringly, Garlande had built it just outside the ancient Gallo-Roman city wall. By Garlande's time, barbarian and Viking attacks were a thing of the past, and King Louis VI had effectively put the kibosh on marauding noblemen. However, the Seine still flooded regularly, and anything beyond the old walls was particularly vulnerable. Nonetheless, Garlande boldly filled in the marshy area to the north and built his chapel there—the first structure to breach the old Gallo-Roman wall.

And so, in my hunt for the chapel, I followed the old Gallo-Roman wall. I knew that a nice chunk of it crossed Rue de la Colombe (you can see the marking in the pavement just outside number 6). According to old maps, it then took the most direct route eastward, which in today's terms meant that it went directly between Rue des Ursins and Rue Chanoinesse, two of the oldest streets on the island. Rue des Ursins, which lies well below the adjoining Quai aux Fleurs, remains close to what the island's level had been when St-Aignan was built. It's an old street that has gone through many names, but I knew my prize was somewhere in that knot of buildings at its western end.

Everything pointed to that courtyard, but I couldn't seem to get beyond its gates. And then, one evening as I strolled past, I saw a woman emerge from a nearby house. Was there a chapel located in that courtyard? I asked her, explaining that I was an historian who was greatly interested in the chapel. Oh, yes, she assured me, and pointed towards one of the houses.

Baffled, I tried to find out more. Then she suddenly said, "Ah, there is the person you should speak with, Madame." And, indeed, rounding the

corner was a small woman.

This new arrival listened patiently to my plea, then kindly informed me that, most unfortunately, the chapel was not open to the public. And then, with a little twinkle, she suddenly asked, "But would you like to see it?"

Would I! As I expressed my profound gratitude, she unlocked the gate and led me across the courtyard. And then—with a little smile, as if we were in a mutual conspiracy—she unlocked a small door into what looked for all the world like a cellar. Could this possibly be where the old chapel was hiding?



But, of course. You see, it turns out that after the Revolution (which stripped St-Aignan of its ecclesiastical purposes), the chapel fell on hard times. After serving as a stable for a house, both structures were plastered over to look like one building. That could have been the end, but most fortunately, a recent owner recognized the little chapel's worth and gave it back to the diocese. After a cleaning and a careful restoration, it now serves as a chapel for the nearby Seminaire de Paris.

I stepped inside and looked around. It was dark, barely lit with lamps strategically placed to illuminate the structural elements and carvings. It also was small, with Romanesque vaults that reach some 14 feet above the floor. After the Revolution, someone built an internal wall across the nave, and steps now lead up through a doorway into the equally diminutive second room (overall, the whole thing measures about 21 feet wide by 33 feet long). But it was the small room where I now was standing that absorbed my attention.

It is difficult to convey what it feels like to be in such a place. Despite its long years of desecration, St-Aignan radiates an unusual amount of tranquility. Perhaps its small size helps. Perhaps, as well, the blessed absence of tour groups contributes to the calm. But more than anything, St-Aignan seems to reflect the assuredness of a place of worship that has survived. Its beauty is in its strength, which its Romanesque arches clearly delineate. The Gothic (soon to arrive in Paris) was all about light and soaring, but this little chapel reminds us of the importance of being solidly rooted. Its arched vaults spring serenely upward,

but never forget where they came from.

The result is reassuringly intimate—an emotion perfectly reinforced by the small Virgin and Child on the eastern wall. This is a reproduction; the original, dating from the 14th century, now graces the southeast pillar of Notre Dame's transept. But no matter. This one, too, is lovely.

There have been other changes as well—some the result of hardship, others the outcome of changing taste or the ravages of time. Once upon a time, there was a rounded apse where a flat wall now rises. A stained glass window depicting Saint Aignan has disappeared. The door through which I entered has been cut into the north wall (its metal has been painted on the inner side to camouflage it). Still, what is remarkable is that so much remains.

First, there are those rounded Romanesque arches, sturdy and graceful relics that have survived the ages. And then there is the carving. Time has done a job on some of it, but a surprising amount has endured. Stylized leaves, cut confidently and deep, crown the capitals of the larger columns, in the Corinthian manner. Only a master carver could have created these intricate beauties, and some think he must have been a Burgundian, trained in an Abbey of Cluny workshop. By the time Garlande began to build his small chapel, Cluniac style had come to represent the pinnacle of good taste.

Whatever his identity, a talented carver seems to have been responsible for most of the sculpture in St-Aignan, including elements of some small carvings along a recently rediscovered portal on the chapel's southern wall. But another hand appears to have been responsible for the small faces within these medallions. These are less-deftly crafted, but show remarkable individuality.

This same hand, or hands, may also have been responsible for the somewhat crude but friendly array of animals that crown the smaller columns within the chapel. These include a monkey-like man with a bulging tummy; a winged griffin (I thought it looked like a salamander, but apparently I'm wrong); and a couple of friendly lions, their paws just touching. Someone had a good deal of fun with these figures, especially the monkey, which may have closely resembled an associate—possibly even one of the clerics.

Local craftsmen working with a Burgundian mentor? We will never know. But thanks to St-Aignan, we do know that quality carving had been revived in the Paris area much earlier than once thought. Indeed, Garlande had much to be proud of when his little chapel was completed. He had built solidly, and with all the artistry that his position and wealth commanded.

Fortunately, his chapel of St-Aignan still survives—a deeply moving treasure from a distant past.

Note: Those interested in visiting St-Aignan should apply in writing to: Père Patrick Faure, 15 Rue des Ursins, 75004 Paris. It is also open during Paris' Journées du Patrimoine (Heritage Days), on the third weekend of every September.

—By Mary McAuliffe

RothRay

By Ethan Gilsdorf

"Come home to home!" Roth exclaims, swinging open the door to one of apartment rental company RothRay's apartments at 26 Rue de La Reynie, a sycamore-fringed pedestrian street near Les Halles. Voilà. A bright and clean place to call "chez vous" for a week, month or year. With a fully equipped kitchen and other comforts like a washing machine, iron and ironing board, cable TV, lock box and answering machine, the address is typical of RothRay's selection of immaculate, smartly furnished apartment rentals.

Sadly, "Reynie" is not representative of the Paris rental scene, for in the biz, several agencies can represent a single property. Apartments might be owned not by professionals but by those trying to make an extra buck while away in Tahiti. The result? Poorly maintained vacation rentals with inexperienced, absentee service. But unlike other agencies, RothRay's 19-year veterans Ray Lampard and Roth own their apartments, and each is strictly for tourist rental.

"When toilets don't work for foreigners," Roth laments, in his charming, fractured English, "it breaks my heart. It's important to feel welcomed by the small things." Hence, the dishwashers and bathtubs that work like new. The historic features like fireplaces, stone walls and overhead antique beams. And the containers of coffee and tea in the kitchens, umbrellas by the doors, and the complimentary bottle of champagne, soft drinks, snacks and flowers as a welcome gift in every apartment.

"I've had to explain to clients it's included," Lampard chuckles. "They expect a bill." The two make a perfect team. White-haired, British and more reserved, Lampard handles the money side of things, while the ageless and bubbly Roth, a former Sorbonne poly-sci student from Cambodia, scouts out new properties and oversees their renovation. "I buy apartments in a completely disaster situation," says Roth, who then decorates and furnishes each one, down to old photos of Les Halles on the walls and the selection of

CDs and local guidebooks.

"We see ourselves as way ahead of the competition," Lampard says. "We just do things different." For example, RothRay never takes a damage deposit, but they do accept personal checks from the U.S., Australia and the U.K. Utilities are included, except telephone.

And it may be business heresy, but they don't expect to be paid until the "end" of the rental period. Prices range from 80 to 200 euros a day when you rent for the seven-day minimum, but this rate drops to 55-160 euros a day when their apartments are booked for three weeks or more.

RothRay once managed 25 apartments. "But this was too much, too much stress," says Lampard. "We weren't able to give enough personal attention." So, they downsized to 11 studios, one- and two-bedroom apartments centered only in the snail's-eye of Paris: mostly the 1st and 2nd arrondissements, with one property scattered in each of the 3rd through 6th. These locations reflect not only their clients' desire to be in the thick of all things Parisian, but serve a practical function, too. The RothRay office is on the border of the 1st and 4th, right by the Pompidou Center, within easy walking distance of most of their apartments. That means either Roth or Ray can zip out to change a light bulb or help translate for a client trying to fill a prescription at the neighborhood pharmacy.

"We consider clients as friends," says Lampard. "We do what we'd do for friends." Rent from RothRay, and expect not only a place to stay that rivals a two- or three-star hotel, but a memorable welcome from two helpful and gracious neighbors.

•RothRay: 10 Rue Nicolas-Flamel, 4th. Tel: 1-48-87-13-37. E-mail: rothray@online.fr. Site: www.rothray.com.



▲ PARIS VISITS ▼

Rentals in Paris

By Ethan Gilsdorf

Glenn Cooper likes to tell a story about a particular client who seemed unclear on the concept of short-term Parisian apartment rentals—that they might have interesting historical quirks and be subject to all the normal and sometimes noisy activity of a residential building.

The client arrived at one of his properties and immediately expressed her displeasure. She hated the lamps. So Cooper bought new ones. Then she grumbled about the creaky antique parquet wooden floors. The customer even asked if he would be so kind as to please fix some bothersome period stonework. "If guests complain, that's not what I want," Cooper says. "I take seriously my responsibilities to owners and renters. I try to say the customer is always right." But there are limits to what kind of service Cooper can provide. He can't deliver dishwashing soap at 8pm on a Sunday. And he can't renovate a medieval-era stairwell just because a client occasionally bumps her head.

Cooper's company, Rentals in Paris, is a relative newcomer to the Paris apartment rental scene. But after only five years, the agency has already helped raise the industry's bar for service, while also gently educating its clients what to expect: high-quality independent accommodations, not hotel-level service. Based in Old Brookville, New York, Rentals in Paris offers 25 properties, 10 of which Cooper owns himself. As the local point-man, Cooper runs the Paris operations. "The apartments are my babies," he says.

Cooper's family is growing. He's been buying about two apartments per year since 1999. Most are focused in the 1st through 7th arrondissements, in neighborhoods like the Marais, Opéra, Tuileries and the Luxembourg Garden. Cooper's present specialty is the "other" island, Ile de la Cité. Behind Notre Dame lies a small neighborhood of peaceful streets where Cooper will soon have a total of five properties.

"This is something magical, this place," he says of the 14th-centu-

ry building at 16 Rue Chanoinesse. And he's right: dark beams, stone walls, terracotta tile floors. He finds the quieter Cité even more convenient than the coveted Ile St-Louis. "A tourist staying here never has to take the Métro."

To provide a personal touch, Cooper has cleverly furnished each rental with a notebook of advice and tips, from local restaurant menus to useful French phrases. Armed with a spreadsheet that shows customer names and arrival times, he also arranges for someone from his company to meet each client at their rental. Apartments sleep from two to five people, and generally cost from \$1,000 to \$1,500 week. The minimum stay is a week, but Cooper is seeing an increasing number of clients who book for a month or longer. All properties are fully furnished with TVs, washing machines, equipped kitchens and linen service.

What also sets his company apart from the competition is its website, which has two especially helpful features. First, you can check availability and book entirely on line. Second, you can read comments posted by previous guests. Feedback like "We loved hearing birds and morning bells" and "It was perfect for my kids and us" can help match Cooper's clients to the ideal rental.

Cooper used to work for the French government and found his job pointless. But with Rentals in Paris, he seems to have found his calling. It's a job where he can combine his expertise as a Paris resident with his instinct for hospitality. "My role as an American who lives here is to help. That's the pleasure. Now I feel useful."

•Rentals in Paris: Tel: 516-977-3318 (in the U.S.). E-mail: abby@rentals-paris.com. Site: www.rentals-in-paris.com.



PILLOW TALK

The Paris hotel scene is changing from traditional to “today”

After three years on the Paris hotel beat, I’ve discovered that no single hotel is perfect for all travelers. Seems obvious, but I learned this the hard way. Some friends came to visit, so I booked them into a budget place I liked—let’s call it “Hôtel Le Funky Charm.” But after one night, they ended up calling it “Le Rat’s Nest.”

People still ask me for advice. But ever since I’ve discovered the idea of “homey” is by no means universal, I’m more cautious. I ask questions. Are CNN and Denny’s-like breakfasts required? Or can you skip American comforts as long as the ambiance lives up to your 17th-century, antique-beamed historical fantasy? The trick to a happy Paris hotel experience is to match personal taste to the kind of place that best says “chez moi.”

If tourists are dissatisfied with their hotel in Paris, it’s not for lack of choice. Swanky or soulless, elegant or exhausted, up-and-coming or down-and-out: hotels in this town come in many flavors to suit the market’s diverse palates. Yet as the economic climate has changed, fewer and fewer of the Beat Hotel/Baudelaire’s garret-type hotels have managed to survive. Since my last update of the Beds Hotel Guide (which, subscribers are reminded, can be downloaded free of charge at www.parisnotes.com; see passwords on page 2), the American-born, Motel 6 style has swallowed up and gutted more and more small, family-run places. These are the establishments that have given Paris its reputation for charming, sometimes quirky and occasionally infuriatingly small (and small-minded) mère-et-père hotels.

For better or for worse, global hotel chains are here to stay. However, another trend—the 15-to-18 percent downturn in American visitors to Paris, two years running—means marketing departments and interior designers no longer solely cater to the once inexhaustible U.S. client base. It’s the British who now occupy the number one slot for top nationalities visiting the city, and other countries like Brazil, Russia, China and the new EU members are also sending tourists in droves. The influx of more diverse, nouveau riche visitors has encouraged hoteliers to go more international, more fashionable, more upscale. In 2002, despite 9/11, roughly 1,200 new hotel rooms appeared on the scene—and three-quarters of them aimed for the four-star stratosphere. Each year, more outdated properties have emerged from their cocoons of protective plastic and scaffolding as kaleidoscopic butterflies.

Fueled in part by this shift in visitors, a “hip hotel” movement has become the most recognizable hotel trend of the past few years. With an emphasis on minimal lines, smooth surfaces and muted colors, the aesthetic can take an East-meets-West/California Zen approach, or an almost kitschy, glam-rock theatricality. Some hotels decorate themselves like precious jewelry shops and fabric boutiques, mixing flickering votive

candles with silky curtains, inordinate cushions and antique lamps. Gothic, Neoclassical or Second Empire motifs might recall previous eras, or lobbies could resemble sushi bars or art galleries. The staff are often suave “team members” dressed more for a night of clubbing than for hauling your luggage (invariably, they speak flawless English). Indulgences like air conditioning (installed to combat fears of a second devastating heat wave) are nearly as ubiquitous as wireless (“wi-fi”) and high-speed access to the Internet.

This new breed of designer hotel recognizes the youthful, cosmopolitan traveler’s desire for



tasteful surroundings that subvert the stuffy old French Louis-the-whatever luxury code (i.e., marble and gold equal prestige and class). But the fad is not immune to the hotel industry’s weaknesses. Some designer knockoffs are cashing in, and it’s even trickled down to the two- and three-star level. You’ll find some of the cheaper minimalist ideas incorporated into chain hotels. The worst of the lot can feel like sleeping in the sterile pages of an Ikea catalog.

But one of the best is the **Hôtel du Bourg Tibourg**. Thanks to Jacques Garcia, who also decorated the celebrated L’Hôtel, this jewel in the Marais radiates an invigorating, if not naughty, harem-like mood. Baths include tubs set behind arches covered with ink-black tile work. For cocktails, check out the cool subterranean lounge, bedecked in medieval fabrics. There’s also a tiny garden at the bottom of an open-air shaft that gives a little natural light to the place; otherwise it’s all atmospheric interiors, royal blue paints, velvet red fabrics and pulsing candles. Though rooms are small, the cacophony of stripes, tassels, leopard skin and Gothic trim somehow works.

Beginning to colonize the part of town between the Marais and Oberkampf is **Le Général Hôtel**. Here, designer Jean-Philippe Nuel shocks you with his lavish fuchsia-colored lobby walls, cleverly offset by sleek, snow-white furniture. The rooms are more submissive: choose from cream, chestnut or chocolate schemes. Funky freebies include green apples on the pillows and silver rubber duckies for bath time. These and other touches (more apples floating in vases of flowers,

bowls of neon-colored candy) are all either irrelevant fun or annoyingly cute, depending on your point of view. But the fitness room and sauna are luxurious, considering the price. The breakfast area transforms into a flashy bar after hours, or you can just stroll to the hot Oberkampf district for drinks and dinner.

Up in Montmartre is another conspicuous designer hotel, the **Villa Royale**, though its entrance is refreshingly low-key. On the edge of the slightly sleazy but otherwise tame Pigalle district, this glitzy hotel banks on the neighborhood’s cabaret climate to create a wonderland of kitschy fun. Booking any of the “neo-Baroque” boudoirs—the Claude Debussy, Jean-Paul Gauthier, Brigitte Bardot or Catherine Deneuve—is a bit like going backstage for a costume change at the Moulin Rouge: you’re surrounded by burgundy satins, deep-blue velvets and flat-screen TVs inside gilt picture frames. Pricier “chambres royales” include Jacuzzis and gas fireplaces, some with views of the Sacre Cœur Cathedral. Bathrooms even have clothes steamers.

Aside from design, the other hotel trend is competitive pricing and promotional schemes targeted at spenders of U.S. dollars. Giants like the Concorde Group’s Hôtel Lutetia and Hôtel de Crillon, and GLA Hotels like the Lancaster, Bel-Ami and Montalembert, now offer guaranteed rates in American currency, a scheme to assure your final bill weathers any exchange rate flare-ups between the dollar and euro. (Links to these and hundreds of other hotels are available on the Hotel Links page at www.parisnotes.com.) Even the super-luxe Hôtel Meurice favors Ben Franklins these days; this summer, they sweetened the deal with a “D-Day Package” of wine, cheese, a picnic lunch and a day-trip to the Normandy beaches. Others hotels in traditionally “American” neighborhoods, like St-Germain-des-Prés’ Hôtel d’Aubusson, have promotions that encourage multiple-night stays, with extra incentives like wine tastings, concert tickets and Seine river cruises. Lots of properties held their 2004 prices to 2003 levels; others offer the fifth night free.

So far, no brilliant marketing schemes have emerged from the Paris Office de Tourisme or the national French Government Tourist Office to lure back les Américains. For the hotel customer, one important lesson is clear: it pays to shop, and surf, around for the best deals. Yes, pick the hotel whose look and feel please you. But also consider comparable hotels, even those out of your price range. That big luxury boom is beginning to look like a glut, and I wouldn’t be at all surprised if, before too long, some of these jewelry box hotels started to close.

—By Ethan Gilsdorf

•Hôtel du Bourg Tibourg, 19 Rue du Bourg-Tibourg, 4th. Tel: 1-42-78-47-39. Site: www.hotelburgtbourg.com.

•Le Général Hôtel, 5-7 Rue Rampon, 11th. Tel: 1-47-00-41-57. Site: www.legenerallhotel.com.

•Villa Royale, 2 Rue Duperré, 9th. Tel: 1-55-31-78-78. Site: www.leshotelsdeparis.com.

trial scale—becoming quite rich in the process. Kaplan calls this “retro-innovation.”

Another trailblazer absent from the party was the influential pioneer Bernard Ganachaud, whose bakery, *A la Flûte Gana* (226 Rue des Pyrénées, 20th), off the tourist path at the top of the Rue des Pyrénées, perfected the slow-rise technique called “sur poolish.” It was Ganachaud who had the radical notion of an open kitchen, proving that you could get people to climb long distances for a tasty baguette and a chance to see the baker with his hand in the sourdough. Kaplan calls this “boulangerie-théâtre.”

Poilâne left behind not only an empire but also his family’s charming throwback of a bakery. Here, an ancient oven still blasts away in the basement and diffident vendeuses dole out mahogany-brown boules and caramel-colored apple tartlettes as if it were still on a back street and not part of a 21st-century strip of luxury shops on Rue du Cherche-Midi. Ganachaud has, meanwhile, deeded his destination bakery to his three daughters. In true contemporary style, they have developed a baguette with a brand name and a technique for replicating it “à la franchise.”

In 1999, when I first met Kaplan, he was already gaining the reputation of a bread fanatic (some might say crank). The snow-white, cottony neo-baguette that had begun popping up everywhere in the 1980s, he noted with characteristic pungence, “looked lovely but was barren of odor and taste.”

Even in the early nineties, relatively few bakers were working with live “levains,” or natural yeasts, feeding them and borrowing from them in a constant struggle to balance flavors and baking performance. When Kaplan wasn’t busy poring over documents in dusty archives, he liked to hang out with these brave young bakers, exhorting them to push their standards ever higher and cheering them on when they did.

Among them was Poujauran, who was so appreciative of the intense American’s attention that he tucked “Le Meilleur Pain du Monde,” Kaplan’s 740-page history of 18th-century bakers, in among the baked goods at his shop (20 Rue Jean-Nicot, 7th).

Five years ago, in the interest of science, Kaplan had me and two assistants round up a dozen top-of-the-line baguettes for a blind tasting, based on his then work in progress, a 20-point rating system.

A wiry man with oversize glasses and a small gray beard, Kaplan tore into the bread as if he were on mission to save France, or at least one of its most visible symbols.

His point system, refined and spelled out in “Cherchez le Pain,” already rested on its own vocabulary. A decent crust “sounds like a drum and cracks lightly under a finger’s pressure,” he said, and the “mie,” or interior, should be “silky to the touch,” and the flavor “round rather than angular,” “long in the mouth” and “with flesh.”

The best of our baguettes had mies the color of piano keys, stretchy, misshapen holes, yeasty aromas and crusts that cracked (even if they didn’t

necessarily shatter).

A confluence of good influences was already being brought to bear, from the revival of stone mills and flavorful strains of wheat to the introduction of gentle kneading equipment. The government gave a push with an annual Fête du Pain, with teach-ins for young bread appreciators and the like. This spring the bakers of the 18th arrondissement hired a 1930s city bus to take fans on a tour of its boulangeries.

Today noshers can revel in the results, from tiny operations with a Luddite air, like *Le Pétrin Médiéval* (31 Rue Henri Monnier, 9th), to EK, a high-design bakeshop-and-restaurant (85 Blvd Malesherbes, 8th) under Kayser’s spreading umbrella, to Paul, the family-run chain that is sandwiching its open-kitchen bakeshops and cafés into malls and historic quarters alike.

And wasn’t that bread by Moisan that I spotted at a Monoprix near Bastille?

Though the Fête du Pain has lost some steam, much hoopla continues to surround the city’s annual Grand Prix de la Baguette award. This cliffhanger not only grants one baker in Paris the right to supply the presidential table for a year but also turns him into a minor celebrity. In 2003 the prize went to Laurent Connan (38 Rue des Batignolles, 17th), making him a hero to his neighbors and tripling his sales.

Restaurants accustomed to serving bland no-name baguettes are succumbing to bread fever, too. Last spring, I was surprised by a flavorful baguette at *La Chopette*, a neighborhood wine bar in the 14th—and even more so when the waiter produced a business card from this year’s Grand Prix de la Baguette de la Ville de Paris winner, Mr. Thilloux.

Indeed, the boulanger is no longer in the back room but out in front of the camera. Kaplan has lifted from obscurity such bakers as Tony and Florence Lebehod, a young couple from Normandy (33 Rue de l’Amiral-Mouchez, 13th), while reinforcing the reputations of established bakers like Hervé Malineau (24 Rue St-Paul, 4th). In his book, he offers profiles as well as snapshots of bakers, who smile as if they have been given good-citizen awards by the bread police.

“*Le Guide des Boulangeries*,” with its user-friendly design, made a splash when it appeared, selling 7,000 copies in seven weeks, de Rovira said. But Kaplan’s book is the more serious work. Carried out with taut rules (that 20-point index) and the help of his wife, Marie-Christine Fabiani-Kaplan, it is based on years of study and months of tireless legwork and tasting.

Kaplan’s fearsome intellect and tart sound bites suggest that this Brooklyn-raised historian was French in a previous lifetime. In affectionate articles about him this spring, *Le Monde* referred to him as “incorrigible,” *Le Figaro* as “the ayatollah of bread.”

Over herbal tea at *La Coupole*, shortly after his guidebook was released in May, Kaplan described vivid change in the industry, as immigrants and old-timers alike infuse bread making with fresh energy.

“Go see Poujauran,” he urged, casting his longtime friend as one of the three bakers (with

Poilâne and Ganachaud) who had changed everything.

So I did, finding him a few days later in a cramped office at the back of a rundown building next door to his original bakery.

“I was born in a bakery,” Poujauran said, sliding sideways between two jury-rigged desks. The son of a small-town baker in southwest France, Poujauran made his way to Paris in the 1970s, eventually settling on Rue Jean-Nicot, where he filled a jewelry box of a bakery with fat loaves and Belle Epoque fittings. Married to his métier, he rose to become a leader of the bread-revival movement and a fixture in the press, sporting his signature two-day growth as he posed before his bakery, an irresistible dollhouse version of it positioned in its window.

The dollhouse is still there, Poujauran’s name still hangs over the entrance, and Poujauran, though now married to a young woman and father of three, hasn’t changed a bit. But the bakery is no longer his: about a year and a half ago, complaining of midlife malaise, he sold it—and his name—signing away the right to compete for three years. The new owner has expanded the bakery, building a new room to the left. Confusingly, a boarded-up storefront now stood to the right, boldly bearing the name J. L. Poujauran.

Poujauran confessed that he had had second thoughts. “I was so invested in this milieu,” he said. “I wanted to do bread 100 percent.” And he missed his longtime customers, he said. And (dropping his voice to a near-whisper), what was worse, the new owner of his bakery was not serious about his bread.

“Follow me,” he said, descending a tight set of stairs into the bowels of the building.

There, in a hidden warren of rooms with freshly stuccoed walls and arched openings, stood an enormous state-of-the-art oven: the centerpiece of Poujauran’s new wholesale bakery. One room was devoted to flour, others to fermentation and kneading. A flurry of renovations had culminated in the refinishing of a thick gray wall where the rival businesses met, literally and metaphorically.

Clearly, it was Poujauran’s plan to one day break through. But he was loath to discuss the details, preferring to emphasize his delivery of boules, baguettes and fruit and nut breads to dozens of prestigious restaurants. “It’s still two grams, maximum, of yeast per liter of filtered water, with sel de Guernsey,” he said of his simple-yet-not-so-simple master recipe.

If all goes as planned, Poujauran hinted, his lawyers will pound out an agreement to allow him to open a retail establishment again this year. First-time visitors confronting the twin storefronts will undoubtedly be as confused as I was. But soon enough they will recognize this embarrassment of riches as the latest chapter in a rich culinary history.

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PICK OF THE MONTH

Aurélie de Nemours

Much has been written and said of lady painters. Ninety-four-year-old Aurélie de Nemours, a disciple of Fernand Léger, simply says: "Since I am a painter, naturally I paint"—and that is what she does, most beautifully. There is, in her abstract geometric paintings shown here (as well as in the fine stained glass windows she created for Notre-Dame de Salagon), a remarkable purity of line and color. Nemours, so far removed from the "hype" of the current commercial art world, and known and collected only by a few discerning museums and art-lovers, is a rare pleasure to discover in this fabulous retrospective. •Centre Pompidou, Galerie 2, Niveau 6. (Nocturne: Thurs until 11pm.) Until Sept 27. Site: www.centrepompidou.fr.

MUST SEE

Pierre Alechinsky

One might well call this retrospective of the last 50 years the "120 paper works and ink follies of Pierre Alechinsky," or, as he says: "All that you paint will be held against you." This is not an exposition of pretty paintings, but rather an ironical, outrageous silent scream—and certainly an exciting encounter for those who wish to think about the role of the artist in society. •Centre Pompidou, Galerie 2, Niveau 6. (Nocturne: Thurs until 11pm.) Until Sept 27. Site: www.centrepompidou.fr.

The History of France

100 manuscripts and other treasures, from the Merovingian epoch (500-750 AD) to the 5th Republic (1958), are on show during the massive renovation of the museum: the keys to the Bastille (and a few stones retrieved from the rubble after its storming); manuscripts concerning Marie Antoinette, Baudelaire, Voltaire, etc.; the dagger used to kill the Duc de Berry; and an eclectic array of other curiosities. •Musée de l'Histoire de France, Hôtel de Rohan, 3rd. Until Nov 4.

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.

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.

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. Site: www.mep-fr.org.

WORTH A VISIT

Luciano Fabro

This is the first in a series of unexpectedly delightful expositions of contemporary artists in

this rather dreary museum: a major figure in the peculiar "Arte Povera" movement, Luciano Fabro displays his originality and extraordinary talent.

•Musée Bourdelle. Site: www.paris.fr/musees/bourdelle. Until Oct 4.

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.

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. Until Oct 10. Site: www.fondation.cartier.fr.

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.

George Sand, 1804-1876

This is an ultra-romantic homage to George Sand, celebrating her life and work: an exposition of paintings, manuscripts, objects and memorabilia. Conferences on Sand's work are also offered.

•Musée de la Vie Romantique. Until Nov 28. Site: www.paris.fr/musees/Vie_romantique/default.htm.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Electronic Music

The 7th edition of the electronic music festival, and the colorful Techno Parade through the streets of Paris, organized by the Technopol Association: a week-long festival of concerts, expos, conferences and films on the theory and practice of this rambunctious art. •Sept 10-19 (Techno Parade on the 18th). Site: www.technopol.net.

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.

Food Fest

Barges moored on the Seine will host the 4th annual Southwest Festival. Producers will proudly display their foie gras, cassoulet, wines and other regional specialties from the Lot-et-Garonne, Gers and Tarn-et-Garonne. There will also be free music and activities. •Quays Montebello and de la Tournelle (facing Notre Dame). Sept 17-19.

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 at 4pm. 3E to enter the park, but the concerts are free. Until Sept 19.

Fêtes des Jardins

All over the city, the theme is green, with over 600 events in Paris parks and gardens. A Village de

Petites Notes, continued from page 2

might be thinking of building on the site of the site's architectural significance.

The New Jeu de Paume

It's been a lot of things since Napoleon III built it in 1851: a Réal Tennis Court (a tennis-like court game trumped by lawn tennis), an art exhibition space, a museum for the collections of the Musée du Luxembourg, a warehouse for art looted by the Germans, a state museum for its collection of Impressionist art (the collection was moved to the Musée d'Orsay, when it opened in 1986) and, until recently, an exhibition space for contemporary art (largely unknown to the public). The Jeu de Paume (northwest corner of the Tuileries, off the Place de la Concorde, 1st) now has a new mission: it is the home of the French national photography collection (Centre National de la Photographie), which includes works by the recently deceased Henri Cartier-Bresson, Jacques Henri Lartigue and André Kertesz. The new Jeu's parallel mission will be as an exhibition space for all forms of images, as well as video and film. It will also host related conferences.

Fêtes des Jardins will be erected on the parvis in front of Notre Dame, where information about all the events will be available. Or, go to the City's website, look under "Culture" and then "Agenda Culturel." •Sept 25-26. Site: www.paris.fr.

PLANNING AHEAD

The Baron Rothschild Collection

15th- to 18th-century drawings and prints from the Edmond de Rothschild collection, one of the most important in the world. •Louvre, Aile Sully. Oct 8-Jan 10.

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.

Paris Photo

A fair that has become "the undisputed standard for viewing the world's best photography." Works from the 19th century to modern masterpieces to the latest work by leading contemporary photographers. •Carrousel du Louvre. Nov 11-14. Site: www.parisphoto.fr.

Spring/Summer 2005 Fashion Collections

This is the bi-annual prêt-à-porter fashion shows primarily in the Carrousel du Louvre, but all over Paris as well. Restaurants and hotels fill up, so be sure to make early reservations. •Oct 4-12. Site: www.modeaparis.com.