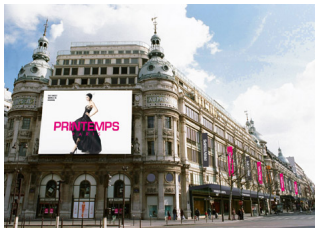


Three Days in Paris

Written by Story by Marlene Montanez

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This spring, treat yourself to a little shopping -- shopping in Paris, that is.



You wouldn't think that just three days in Paris would be worth the transatlantic journey, but when you see Paris the way Parisians do, (or at least the way I did on my Concorde Hotels Shopping Tour) you'll see it's well worth the journey.



Having been to Paris before, this trip was all about the shopping. After all, besides scintillating dining and breathtaking landmarks, this is what Paris is known for, n'est pas? So, my Parisian trip this past fall began at the Hotel Concorde Saint-Lazare -- an amazing 19th century hotel that exudes Parisian glamour and seamlessly melds décor that's graced the building for more than 100 years with updated contemporary fixtures and furnishings.

The Concorde Saint-Lazare boasts 266 guest rooms including 40 suites and junior suites where absolutely no luxury is spared. You won't find the typically tiny European hotel rooms here; rather, you'll relish the fact that plenty of space, WiFi, turndown service and, most importantly, down comforters are all standard amenities.

But perhaps one of the most notable features of the hotel is its prime location: it is mere steps away from some of the world's best shopping, hands down. Until this trip, I was under the impression that the Champs-Élysées was the premier shopping destination in Paris—that is, until I got a first-class tour of the Opera district where the Concorde Saint-Lazare is situated. Within walking distance (even for us West Coasters) are Parisian boutiques, well-known chains (like the Gap) and most importantly, Le Printemps Haussmann.

A destination in itself, Le Printemps Haussmann is one of the largest fine department stores in Europe. Wowing shoppers since 1865, you'll find every luxury fashion and beauty line, as well as contemporary lines, on each of its eight floors. Think Gucci, Lanvin, Dior, Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent and Burberry boutiques -- to name just a few. Le Printemps even has an entire floor devoted just to shoes; it's the largest shoe space in Europe with 70-plus brands. Also plentiful are the historical restaurants with contemporary cuisine like Brasserie Printemps and Ladurée. (In fact, the tearoom at Ladurée is so famous that Parisians are known to stop in just for the tea and nibbles.)

But your Parisian shopping adventure wouldn't be complete without some perfume, and that includes a visit to the flagship Annick Goutal boutique. The luxury perfume house (said to be a favorite must-stop for Madonna) is known for its sophisticated scents and word-of-mouth success.

Aside from all the shopping, an absolute don't-miss is a visit to the Musée Baccarat and the Baccarat Cristal Room restaurant. The Musée Baccarat was previously a private mansion and in 2003 was reopened after a redesign by renowned designer Philippe Starck. You'll see some of the most amazing handcrafted glass chandeliers in the museum along with a few optical illusions, jewelry and stemware.



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For dining, be sure to plan ahead as the Baccarat Cristal Room can sometimes run a two-month waiting list and is one of the hottest eateries in Paris. (It's a favorite of David and Victoria Beckham, and Eva Longoria-Parker and Tony Parker are said to have had their pre-wedding reception there.)

With all the world-class dining, shopping and hotels right at your fingertips, it'll be difficult to not make this stay a long one. But even if you have just three days to spare, it's definitely well-worth the journey.

Concorde Hotel

Book the Shopping package at any Concorde Hotel in Paris to receive exclusive shopping discounts, gifts and VIP offers to Le Printemps Haussmann, Sephora, Annick Goutal, Fauchon, Baccarat and more

Hotel Concorde Saint-Lazare Paris, 800.888.4747, www.concordestlazare-paris.com.

Hotel Lutetia Paris, PHTK, 800.888.4747, www.lutetia-paris.com.