

Paris off the beaten track

An endless moveable feast

BY JANE MUNDY, SPECIAL TO THE SUN AUGUST 19, 2015

Paris Authentic has a fleet of cars and guides to show you Paris.



PARIS - So you've been to Paris countless times, and the thrill of Notre Dame, Eiffel Tower, Louvre and Musée d'Orsay is wearing thin.

Well, you're just getting started.

The City of Lights is an endless moveable feast, and even if you're just stopping off on your way to another destination, there are plenty of gems hidden off the beaten track for those who have been there, done that.

One of the best views of Paris is from the Galeries Lafayette rooftop terrace, and it's also free. Stock up at one of several food stops - from juice bar to caviar - on the ground floor, and check out the Galerie des Galeries before heading to the eighth floor with your picnic. The gallery showcases young artists from around the world whose exhibits aim to cross over between fashion, fine art and design. And if you do feel the urge to shop, be prepared to

have deep pockets. There are 3,000 brands under this gorgeous glass-domed roof, not including home furnishings across the street.

Not to be missed is the stunning architecture at the new Philharmonie de Paris, located in the 19th arrondissement in the Parc de la Villette. The concert hall, which debuted in January of this year, has been described as a “scorched spaceship” and a mash of broken paving stones. Love it or hate it, this metal mountain is definitely remarkable. Paris’s latest institution, along with its spacious plaza and restaurants, is set to become the next cultural hub of Paris. Book ahead for a guided tour of the building between performances.

Time to rest your weary feet and blast around the city in the back of an iconic Citroen 2CV convertible. “Paris Authentic” car tours offer a wide range of services, including champagne on ice and the charming chauffeurs. You can be picked up at your hotel and buzz around narrow cobblestone streets in Le Marais and Montmartre. And when the two-hour tour is over, you’ve had so much fun that you book a night tour to experience the City of Lights from a new angle.



While most tourists head towards Montmartre and the Sacré-Coeur from the Pigalle metro station, hipster Parisians who call themselves BoBo (Bourgeois Bohemian) walk in the opposite direction.

Ask your Paris Authentic guide to drop you off in South Pigalle, where Guillame Le Roux, owner/operator of LeVrais Paris, meets you for one of his walking tours.

His tours include “Welcome to Paris” and “Famous Districts” for first-timers and

“The Unexpected” for those who have purportedly seen it all.

Le Roux knows every nook and cranny of trendy SoPi.

“My neighbourhood has changed so much,” he said recently. “It was once the red-light district filled with hostess bars, when many musicians called Pigalle home.” As if on cue, we stroll past a guitar shop, a vinyl cafe and a few sex shops nestled between trendy cocktail bars. We then walked past Avenue Frochot, a tree-lined cul-de-sac closed by a wrought-iron gate where Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas and (much later) Jean-Paul Gaultier once lived.

Le Roux led us down a narrow path to Le Musée de la Vie Romantique and its lovely shaded garden for afternoon tea. Or you can have lunch at the cafe in the greenhouse. The elegant townhouse was once a literary hangout for George Sand and Frédéric Chopin, to name a few.

We walked along rue Clauzel, lined with chic specialty clothing stores where you can do some serious damage. Le Roux’s running commentary turned to food as we turned onto rue des Martyrs, a food-lover’s paradise.

Past the charcuterie at Terra Corsa delicatessen and a rainbow of macaroons at award-winning Arnaud Delmontel pâtisserie - both bursting with shoppers - we arrived at La Ferme Saint Hubert Cremerie Rochechouart. This fromagerie claims to have all the cheeses in France. That may or may not be true, but Henri, the 75-year-old owner, knows which village each goat cheese (and there are too many to count) comes from. After you’ve sampled too many to make a decision, ask your server to vacuum-pack a few stinky cheeses to bring home: Canada Customs allows you to bring in 20 kilograms of cheese per person - just remember to declare it. Henri suggests you serve one goat cheese, one soft sheep cheese and one firm cheese after dinner. If you have room in your check-in suitcase, a few specialty wine stores are nearby.

We toasted SoPi over pints of frosty craft beer (Parisians are just getting a taste for it) at Les Petits Gros.

“Paris is like a vampire: it sucks you in but it’s nice to leave and then you come back starving,” said Le Roux, laughing.

The writer was a guest of Atout France and Air France, none of which reviewed or approved this article before publication.

If you go

Philharmonie de Paris: philharmoniedeparis.fr/en

Le Vrai Paris (The Real Paris): levraiparis.com

Paris Authentic: en.parisauthentic.com

For more information visit parisinfo.com

Air France offers a free stopover in Paris - either coming or going -so you can take two vacations for the price of one. The Air France-KLM group now serves Vancouver with five flights per week direct to Paris-Charles de Gaulle. It also serves Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Edmonton and has code-share agreements with WestJet to serve travelers living in

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