

Bon Voyage

Notes for the savvy traveler

HOTELS

- **Hôtel Gabriel** in the Marais bills itself as a “detox hotel”; its 40 rooms and suite boast a *très* modern eco-zen aesthetic interpreted in a soothing palate of neutrals. Massage spaces feature green products; the lounge/bar serves up herbal teas. But it’s not all New Age-y: Rooms have flat screen TVs, iPods and Wi-Fi access. €180 to €280; hotel-gabriel-paris.com.

● Hôtel Gabriel offers calming hues, organic products and high-tech amenities.



- **The Renaissance Paris Arc de Triomphe** brings Christian de Portzamparc’s architectural savvy to Paris’s 17th arrondissement. The building’s undulating glass façade is highly distinctive yet fits in perfectly with the surrounding neighborhood. Rooms are sleek and contemporary with pops of color; the restaurant combines Malaysian and Indonesian cuisine with French savoir faire. €289 to €399 with special promotions online; renaissancearcdetriomphe.com.

- **Hidden Hôtel**, a four-star, 23-room oasis near the Arc de Triomphe, is said to be one of Paris’s first all-organic hotels—the four-star establishment incorporates such natural materials as linen, slate, wood, marble and stone as well as hand made ceramics. From €240 with special promotions online; hiddenhotelparis.com.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

With a fresh (60-ton!) coat of paint, new offerings for visitors and a starring role in several summertime events, the Eiffel Tower celebrates its 120th birthday in style:

- The first floor brasserie has been renovated and reopened as the **58 Tour Eiffel**, with contemporary French menus from €45 at lunch and €65 at dinner. restaurants-toureffel.com
- A new **discovery trail** leads kids through the Eiffel Tower in the fluorescent yellow footsteps of “Gus,” their cartoon guide. Pick up a game book at Cineiffel, the theater located in the Ferrie Pavilion on the first floor. eiffel-tower.com
- **L’Epopée Tour Eiffel**, an exhibit tracing the Iron Lady’s evolution from construction project to international icon, is on view on the first floor and along the stairs. *Through December 31; eiffel-tower.com.*
- **Gustave Eiffel: Le Magicien du fer** is a free exhibition at the Hôtel de Ville about the brilliant engineer behind the tower and the structure’s role as a muse for artists, photographers and filmmakers. *Through August 31; paris.fr.*
- This year’s **Bastille Day fireworks** pay tribute to Gustave Eiffel and his most famous creation; starting at sundown on the Champ de Mars.



AVIGNON ANNIVERSARY

In 1309, amid civil strife in Italy, the newly elected Pope Clement V moved the seat of the Papacy to peaceful Avignon, where it would flourish for almost a century, leaving a lasting architectural and cultural legacy.

This year Avignon celebrates the 700th anniversary of that event with concerts, art exhibitions and festivals, including a 3-D sound-and-light show screened on the façade of the Palais des Papes. avignon-700ans.com

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● Rando Vélo's bike tours include the Loire Valley.

GREAT DEALS

- **City Passes** Pretty much all major French cities now have their own special city passes offering travelers everything from free guided tours, museum entries and monument visits to discounts on transportation, dining and shows. Ask for it at the tourist office of your destination.
- **Bike Tours** Book an all-inclusive, self-guided cycling vacation with company Rando Vélo from just €100 per day, including accommodations, bike rental, luggage transfer and most meals. Available in regions throughout France

including Provence, Loire Valley, Normandy and Bordeaux. <http://randovelo.fr>

- **Rail Atmosphere** Travel between French cities in the style that suits you best with “iDTGV.” There are three different specially themed train carriages: iDzen (the quiet trip: no cell phones or kids), iDzap (the fun trip: mobile bartenders, video game and DVD movie rentals), and iDNIGHT (the night trip: live DJs, bars and parties). Book up to four months in advance at rates starting from €15 one way. <http://ventes.idtgv.com>
- **Responsible Travel** Rent a holiday home, stay in a B&B or book a nature adventure in the French countryside with Responsible Travel. Their “Special Offer Holidays” offer great discounts for last-minute getaways such as walking trips in the Mercantour National Park and lodging in a country retreat in the French Pyrenees. responsibletravel.com



GUIDES

- **Paris: Made by Hand** by Pia Jane Bijkerk. Known for her discerning eye, Australian stylist, blogger and sometime Paris resident Bijkerk divulges the addresses where she shops for her own clients. Organized by arrondissement, this charming guide features some 50 unique boutiques—milliners, stationers, umbrella makers and artisans of all kinds—where things are still made “the old way.” *The Little Bookroom*, \$18.95.
- **The Flea Markets of France** by Sandy Price; photographs by Emily Laxer. This attractive little book is a great resource for anyone who enjoys the thrill of the hunt. Laxer covers flea markets in every region of France (including Paris), rating them for their value, visual appeal and nearby amenities. She also explains what collectibles to look for at each venue and offers suggestions on neighborhood cafés, restaurants, bakeries and museums. *The Little Bookroom*, \$18.95.



NEXT STOP PAPEETE

Through January 2010, the Tahiti Tourism Board is sponsoring a contest to send six lucky couples or families on the vacation of their dreams. Contestants must send in a short video showing why they and a loved one need and deserve the trip. The prize includes air fare, accommodations for seven days and six nights, two meals daily, and land and lagoon excursions. For contest rules, visit investinyourlove.com.

