

Created by: Debra C. Argen

Paris, France



Cole Porter immortalized Paris in the lyrics of his song “I love Paris in the springtime. I love Paris in the fall...”, and I agree; fall is the perfect time for a trip to Paris.



The summer crowds are gone and you feel like you have Paris all to yourself. In November 2004, Edward F. Nesta and I flew from warm and sunny Rome, Italy (Read our article on **Rome in Destinations**.) to overcast and chilly Paris, France for a few days and it was perfect. Yes, perfect for strolling down the Avenue Champs-Elysées wearing a red beret, shopping, museum visits, and long leisurely lunches and romantic dinners at marvelous restaurants.



We stayed at the charming 86-room **Hotel Raphael**, www.raphael-hotel.com, built in 1925, which is perfectly located near the **Avenue Champs-Élysées** and the **Arc de Triomphe**. The Avenue Champs-Élysées is a great place for people watching, and we spent many happy hours strolling down the avenue and exploring the many shops. (Read our article on the **Hotel Raphael** in **Hotels & Resorts**.)



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Since the weather was cool and misty, we spent an enjoyable late afternoon staying warm and dry and visiting the **Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais**, www.rmn.fr, to view their large Japanese exhibit (29 September 2004 until 3 January 2005). The next day was still cool and rainy, but the shopping was just fine at **Printemps** on boulevard Haussmann. This upscale department store has an immense stained glass domed ceiling that deserves an appreciative glance. It certainly adds to the luxurious feel of shopping in Paris. Since we were there in November, Paris was getting ready for Christmas and the streets and shops were beautifully decorated.



Although we have been to Paris many times, we had never visited the **Musée Jacquemart-André**, www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com, which we “discovered” on this visit. This gem of a museum was once the home of Edouard André and his wife, Nélie Jacquemart. This lavish mansion was built in 1869, and features walls that could be lowered into the basement so that the couple could entertain on a grand-scale, as well as an ornate double staircase and marble floors in the Winter Garden. The museum provides complimentary audio headsets, which provide a glimpse into the lives of Edouard and Nélie. Their opulent collection of art, which they amassed during their lifetime, includes paintings by Canaletto, Sandro Botticelli (Virgin and the Infant dated 1470), Van Dyke and Rembrandt paintings from the mid-1600’s, and many other important artists. When we visited, they had a wonderful Napoléon exhibition (28 September 2004 until 3 April 2005). The elaborate treasures of the exhibit included the china, paintings, coronation as well as Napoléon’s military clothing, silver, elaborate jewelry and furniture, of Napoléon and Josephine.



Paris is called “the City of Lights” and we thrilled at seeing the Tour Eiffel beckoning in the night with its shining blue light. We strolled through the **Place Concorde** and admired the sculptures, and since no visit to Paris, at least for us, would be complete without visiting the **Louvre Museum**, www.louvre.fr/louvre.htm, we made time to spend several hours at the museum focusing on our favorite artists. The museum was established in 1793 and their collection is voluminous. To really do the Louvre justice, you could easily spend several days or weeks there and still not see everything. I also enjoyed strolling through the galleries of the museum and watching the artists at their easels sketching or painting copies of the grand masters paintings, and seeing each artist’s interpretation. Since Dan Brown’s book, “**The Da Vinci Code**”, came out, visitors have been flocking to see Da Vinci’s painting, Mona Lisa, so the museum has thoughtfully included signs that direct visitors to the painting.

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Of course, there is more to Paris than just sightseeing, shopping and museums, there is the food, the cheeses, foie gras, truffles, desserts, wines and champagnes! We had some tantalizing meals and some exceptional wines. We had a memorable multi-course gastronomic odyssey of a lunch at **Guy Savoy's** restaurant, which bears his name, www.guysavoy.com, which we write about in **Restaurants**, and a romantic dinner at **La Salle a Manger** at the Hotel Raphael, www.raphael-hotel.com, which may also be found in the **Restaurants** section.

Read our other Paris articles in **Hotels & Resorts**, and **Restaurants**.

Alas, it was time to bid Paris a fond au revoir, at least until the next time. Next stop, Devon, England, via London on **Rail Europe's Euro Star** train www.raileurope.com through the Chunnel!

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