

PARIS BY NIGHT

There's no bad time for the City of Light, but when the sun sets, the arrondissements shine with a life of their own. **BY DAVID HOCHMAN**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEFAN FUERTBAUER



Pierre Bideau's
Illuminations installation
lights up the night sky.

AS YOU GAZE OUT OVER PARIS

from Le Jules Verne, the landmark restaurant midway up the Eiffel Tower, evening arrives one luminous monument at a time. The lights of the Louvre flicker on first, followed by Notre-Dame, the Arc de Triomphe, and the buttery-white domes of the Sacré-Coeur Basilica. It's like a curtain call in reverse, as each brilliant attraction takes to the stage for the night.

Le Jules Verne is certainly a magnificent perch from which to savor Paris after dark. Freshly remodeled for 2019, the fine-dining spot is as sparkly as the flutes of kir royale clinking around the room. The space, with the tower's iron latticework crisscrossing through, is so atmospheric that marriage proposals happen on average twice per night – and here comes another now. Two tables from where my wife and I sit, a gent lowers to one knee as a waiter lifts the dome on a tray bearing a Chiclet-size bauble. The woman cries “oui” over and over, and how could she not?

Paris was practically built for such starry-eyed delight. My wife and I know the city well, and our favorite memories are from when light and lamp led the way – which is why, on this trip, we've returned specifically to explore the city at night. It's the most romantic time, for sure, and worth planning an itinerary around to get the full moonlit effect.

The Pigalle neighborhood we're embedding ourselves in for the week may just be history's most storied after-hours urban haunt, with its riotous red-light district and cabarets, including the Moulin Rouge. The quarter still has its adults-only diversions, but today Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec might be tickled to find once shady dens reborn as hipster *gastrothèques* and *caves gourmandes*. Our airy, modern-art-filled two-bedroom apartment (which can be arranged through a Virtuoso advisor) sits on a tucked-away street between a record shop and an “artisan” doughnut stand in an area recently dubbed “SoPi,” as in south of Pigalle. We joke that it's easy to find – just follow the best-looking young people in town, and you'll inevitably end up at an unmarked cocktail bar or chic rooftop lounge in the vicinity.

With our internal clocks still running on Pacific Standard Time, we're up for whatever the wee hours bring. “In many ways, Paris starts at sunset,” says Manhattan-based Virtuoso travel advisor Barkley Hickox, who recently got engaged and married in the City of Light. “It's not just the lights and the views from the rooftops; it's a kind of boudoir feeling of yesteryear: the red-velvet interiors, the burlesque atmosphere, the underground nature of certain places. You really just need to pick the way you want to discover Paris at night.”

As those options go, it's anything and everything. An evening river cruise centering around sipping and dancing. Exploring on four wheels or two, by vintage car or by bike – or on foot. Or maybe splurging

Night on the town (clockwise from top left): Carousel rides by the Eiffel Tower, Le Relais de l'Entrecôte's steak frites, the Moulin Rouge, onstage at New Morning jazz club, a clear favorite from Le Bristol's “cuisine” cocktail lounge, and Lipstick, a Pigalle neighborhood haunt.



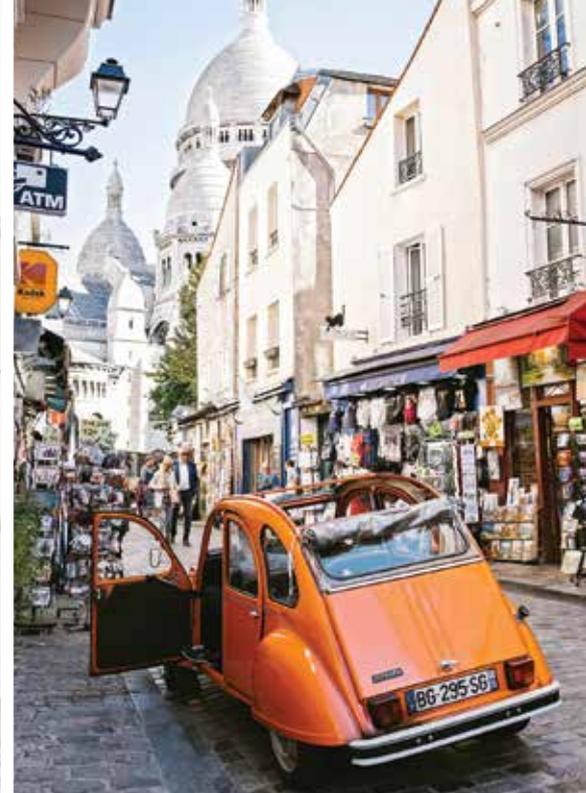
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JA. BONNE
FRANQUETTE

CREP
Aimer Manger Boire et Chanter!!!

CHANTER





“PARIS STARTS AT SUNSET. IT’S NOT JUST THE LIGHTS AND THE VIEWS; IT’S A KIND OF BOUDOIR FEELING OF YESTERYEAR.”

From far left: Montmartre style, SoPi in bloom, stealing a moment on the Seine, and a vintage Citroën.

on a helicopter charter. We took the classic approach on our first jet-woozy night: a twilight driving tour through the cobblestoned lanes of Montmartre in a vintage Citroën. After all, if you’re going to be a tourist in Paris, why not embrace it – ragtop down, Perrier bottle in hand, “La Vie en Rose” warbling in mono? Motoring up to the hilltop Sacré-Coeur church, our driver pointed out Au Lapin Agile, the belle époque nightclub where “struggling” artists and writers with names like Picasso and Apollinaire used to imbibe. Such Montmartre establishments – Le Chat Noir, now gone, was another – were among the first modern nightclubs, where patrons sat at tables enjoying libations while cheering on a musical performance or stage extravaganza.

Some pleasures don’t change. After a couple of hours tooling around like we were in a Truffaut film, the Citroën dropped us at the doorstep of New Morning, an acclaimed jazz and blues club in the tenth arrondissement, where jazz giant Ron Carter, the most recorded jazz bassist in history, played to an enraptured crowd into the wee hours, *d’boom-boom-boom-boom*.

OTHER CITIES MAY DINE LATER (Madrid and Buenos Aires come to mind) or party into the night like there’s no tomorrow – here’s looking at you, Vegas and Rio – but no place dazzles with radiant splendor like the City of Light.

One night, within view of the Panthéon’s illuminated dome, we went full immersion at a delicious dinner party with strangers-turned-friends, all coordinated by Eatwith. In the spirit of living like a local, the company curates shared culinary experiences that bring travelers together over meals in beautiful private homes in cities around the world. Our amiable young Parisian host-chef, Alexis, served homemade *gougères* (cheese puffs), French corn soup, and slow-roasted pork loin with potatoes and Provençal herbs in his cozy family apartment to tablemates from South Korea, Germany, and California. The next night, we joined another small group near the Eiffel Tower to bike through the Latin Quarter, stopping for ice cream at Berthillon (the most famous scoop shop in town), before boarding a riverboat to cruise the Seine. Seriously, if there’s a lovelier way to spend an evening than gazing up from the water at those limelighted bridges and gargoyles, I’d like to hear about it.

Different nights bring different moods and agendas to Paris, and one evening we dedicated ourselves to embracing the city’s *oh là là* at the Moulin Rouge. Legendary since its 1889 opening, it’s equal parts kitschy

and cheeky (oh, and pricey; be warned), but it's the only place in Paris to witness the traditional French cancan, which does feel like magic. For cabaret on the ritzier side, the top pick is Crazy Horse – a grown-up night out, to be sure, but one that's artful without ever being vulgar.

For a less showy outing, we mapped out a whistle-wetting tour of drinking spots par excellence, starting with hotel Le Bristol's "couture" cocktail bar, perhaps the city's most elegant. A DJ sets the tone Thursdays through Saturdays, and when things really got going, we slipped away to Le Marta, the sexy open-air rooftop lounge at Hôtel Barrière Le Fouquet's on the Champs-Élysées. Nursing Marta's signature Pigalle by Night elixir of vodka, vanilla syrup, Champagne, and fresh passion-fruit juice on a sofa surrounded by impossibly gorgeous bar-goers, it feels like you've struck the mother lode of Parisian chic. The feeling continued around the corner at Le Relais de l'Entrecôte, where we ate late-night steak frites before crossing town to Les Bains. Once known as the Studio 54 of Paris (Jean-Michel Basquiat, Mick Jagger, and Yves Saint Laurent were regulars), the ultimate club is now a digital-era disco. Its reopened basement bar has a small cool-down pool – doing "the floss" is arduous work, I assure you – and a soundtrack that keeps many moving until dawn's early light.

THOUGH SEEMINGLY EVERY CORNER OF PARIS has its own pleasures, nothing resonates quite like that Jules Verne view. Before dessert, our waiter discreetly asks if we'd like to step outside, and something in his half smile makes it impossible to resist. We follow him down a short stairway to an exclusive entrance to the tower's second-level deck. (No waiting!) It's ten to eleven, and he tells us to enjoy the scene, but not to return for at least fifteen minutes.

That sounds mysterious, though we're not complaining. At the stroke of eleven, we understand. Above and below on the tower, 20,000 lights begin twinkling and continue for five exhilarating minutes, like a visualization of our own goose bumps. A beacon at the very top sends out rotating light beams that extend for 50 miles. The lights sweep in all directions, making the entire city feel within reach, waiting to be explored, touched, inhaled, devoured. Fortunately, in Paris, the night is still young.



From left:
The Pigalle
by Night
cocktail at
Hôtel Barrière
Le Fouquet's
Le Marta, and
cruising
the Seine.

NEED TO KNOW

Expert advice for discovering the best of Paris at night.

★ Dine later than you would at home, and never eat in a restaurant recommended in a book, unless the book was written by Anthony Bourdain.

★ Pick restaurants on the basis of the "local look" – if the place isn't filled with Parisians, move on.

★ Book the best dinner cruise on the Seine; it's touristy, yes, but gliding past the Eiffel Tower at night is not to be missed.

★ Avoid the Champs-Élysées, and instead wander the trendy, more colorful Marais.

★ Have your advisor arrange an evening helicopter tour with wine and canapés as you fly over the lights of the world's most beautiful city.

★ Visit the Louvre in the evening – you'll see why Mona Lisa is smiling.

★ Never ask a Parisian for directions. Instead, learn how to explain that you have *un problème*. The French don't particularly care if you're lost, but they see themselves as great problem solvers and will be all too happy to solve one of yours.

– **Richard Bruce Turen**,
Virtuoso travel advisor,
Naples, Florida



LIGHT UP THE NIGHTS

Your playbook for post-sunset fun.

GO Virtuoso advisors can work with **Lafayette Travel** to customize private tours throughout France. Four days in Paris could include nightly events such as a skip-the-line visit to the top of the Eiffel Tower, a dinner cruise on the Seine, a two-hour Champagne-sipping ride in a Citroën through Montmartre, and dinner, drinks, and a highbrow burlesque show (with a VIP greeting) at Crazy Horse. *Departures: Any day through 2019; from \$3,350 for two, not including accommodations.*

STAY Live the local life in one of **Luxury Retreats'** Paris properties. The high-end home-share service offers more than 4,500 properties around the world, including 25 in the City of Light, ranging from two to four bedrooms with 24/7 concierge service. *Two-bedroom Parisian homes from \$580 to \$3,200 per night, including a \$200 credit for concierge services.*

A standout in the Golden Triangle between avenue George V and the Champs-Élysées, the 101-room **Hôtel Barrière Le Fouquet's Paris** feels sophisticated without being stuffy. Fouquet's brasserie is a Parisian landmark, with lively people-watching day and night, while its

"secret" rooftop bar draws models, actors, and aspiring head-turners. *Doubles from \$970, including a room upgrade at time of booking, breakfast daily, and a \$100 dining or spa credit.*

On rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, an elegant shopping street within walking distance of the Louvre, **Le Bristol Paris'** 190 rooms include 100 suites appointed with Louis XV- and Louis XVI-style furniture. The hotel's interior garden is the largest of its kind in Paris, and Le Bar du Bristol pours a mighty fine martini. *Doubles from \$1,230, including a room upgrade at time of booking, breakfast daily, and a \$100 spa credit.*

Hôtel Esprit Saint Germain feels like a private Left Bank residence a block off the city's largest park, Luxembourg Garden, with 28 rooms (some with balconies overlooking the neighborhood) and an open bar by the living room fireplace welcoming guests back from city explorations. *Doubles from \$400, including breakfast daily and a cheese plate with wine in room on arrival.*

EAT Virtuoso travelers receive ten percent off **Eatwith's** culinary experiences, dinners, and cooking classes in homes and private locations in Paris and other cosmopolitan locales.

Restaurant **Le Jules Verne** defines the word "spectacle" atop the second level of

the Eiffel Tower, where the dishes compete with the views for breathless raves.

Off rue Saint-Honoré, **Balagan** is a hot ticket for shared plates of Moroccan, French, and Israeli cuisine. *9 rue d'Alger.*

Neo-bistro **Le Bon Georges** in Pigalle is "your low-key, delicious neighborhood food joint," says Virtuoso advisor Barkley Hickox. *45 rue Saint-Georges.*

Le Relais de l'Entrecôte sticks to two quintessential ingredients done right: steak and frites. *15 rue Marbeuf and other locations.*

Join the line at **Le Comptoir du Relais** for a refined bistro lunch and first-rate Paris people-watching. *9 carrefour de l'Odéon.*

Semilla is a true find, with artful small plates in a cool industrial setting in the heart of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. *54 rue de Seine.*

DRINK **Prescription Cocktail Club** doesn't have a website, but the Saint-Germain speakeasy is a whiskey spot worth knocking on doors for. *23 rue Mazarine.*

Lulu White Drinking Club is your go-to Pigalle craft-cocktail spot – till 4 AM on weekends. *12 rue Frochot.*

Mexican tequila and agave in the Marais? At **Candelaria**, *mais oui!* *52 rue de Saintonge. VI.*

Evening temptations (from top): Chocolate nirvana at Berthillon, Crazy Horse, and Le Comptoir du Relais' cod soup.