



Fraîchement PARISIENNE

The latest news, adventures and musings from Paris correspondent Melissa Lesnie, who recently left Sydney for the City of Light to discover how *les voyages forment la jeunesse*...

NEWLY PARISIAN



myPARIS
WITH MELISSA LESNIE

An oriental jewel

It might seem odd to get all gooey about a Parisian hotel that feels anything but Parisian, but that is the case with the exotic and distinctly oriental Hotel Daniel. Hidden in a quiet street just off the Champs Elysees in the eighth, Hotel Daniel is one of Paris's newest boutique hotels. Why do we love it? Because it inspires dreams of far away places, of the bohemian lifestyle of a Paris gone by, and of the freedom and passion evoked by global travel. As soon as you walk into this hotel – which looks decidedly Parisian from the outside – you get a sense that you're anywhere but a stone's throw from the Arc de Triomphe. Interior designer Tarfa Salam made sure of that, enriching the décor with Kazakhstani carpets, Turkish silver, Chinese calligraphy and a range of furnishings that scream oriental boudoir. Being a boutique hotel, the rooms are small but undeniably luxurious, with enormous bathtubs and showerheads to be enjoyed whilst overlooking those oh-so-famous black

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HOTEL DANIEL
Relais & Chateaux
8 rue Frédéric Bastiat,
Paris 75008.
Metro: Saint-Philippe-Du-Roule or George V
<http://www.hoteldanielparis.com>

slate rooves of Paris. One of the most curious – and fun – things about this hotel is the array of Toile de Jouy that adorns the walls of each unique room, intended to inspire adventure and dreams of the Silk Road. The Chinoiserie includes depictions of *Voyage en Chine* by Pierre Frey, *Siam* by Manuel Canovas, and *Voyage de Marco Polo* by Schumacher. But it's not all about the East, with some French motifs making an appearance too, including *Parc de Vincennes* by Brunschwig et fils and *Toile du Lac* by Zoffany. If you're keen on sticking to the Eastern theme (and are craving some Asian fare after a few weeks of delicious but exhaustingly rich French dinners), there are a few fantastic Vietnamese and Chinese restaurants in the vicinity. Ask at reception and they'll give you the good oil. This really is a fabulous little hotel in a great spot – and one that offers something a little different to the discerning traveller.

The question people have asked me here almost daily is one I never really expected: "Pourquoi Paris?" To me, it seems a given, and there are so many reasons that I often struggle to explain. Parisians declare they'd gladly trade for my cushy Bondi brunches and sun-kissed runs across the Harbour Bridge. They're even more perplexed when I reveal I'm not only vegetarian, but allergic to cheese and most other dairy products. "Mince! Ma pauvre!" The pity flows like fondue. But it hardly even occurs to me that I'm missing anything. Once I rattle off the obvious about exquisite architecture, history, culture and cham per square metre (and assure everyone that Parisians have been really rather nice to me), I prepare for the inevitable follow-up: "And is Paris what you hoped it would be?" Again, *oui, ça va sans dire*. But just as the scaffolding of *travaux* can be seen climbing all over the elegant buildings, my personal Paris is still under construction – the monuments that lured me here are just the backdrop for the formation of local rituals. That means running every Sunday morning to the bustling organic markets on Boulevard Raspail, where Juliette Binoche and Cathérine Deneuve can be spotted under silk shawls and sunglasses. If I lose track of what day it is, I know Wednesday is the only day my boulangerie prepares its succulent *pain au cacao*, and if I've run out, it must be Friday. The rest of my Paris rituals revolve around concerts, new friends, new phrases, the potted *chou* I water on my windowsill, unruly youths who play French rap on their boombox beneath my windowsill (I sometimes descend so we can race our bikes to the Eiffel Tower), and other simple pleasures. If it all sounds a little superficial, watch this space: in three months, perhaps I'll have some deeper insights, hopefully not of the Orwellian *Down and Out* variety ...