

Escape



Parisian Perfection

*The City of Light
resets the bar on global luxury
with its latest newcomers
and reinventions*

BY PAUL RUBIO

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THE SUNNY COURTYARD AT LE BRISTOL PARIS.



RIGHT: THE PIERRE-YVES ROCHON-DESIGNED LE BAR DU BRISTOL. FAR RIGHT: SUITE INTERIORS AT LE BRISTOL PARIS. BELOW: EXTERIORS OF LE BRISTOL PARIS.



and also strips the distinction from some esteemed stalwarts of the French hotel industry.

Breezing through the old and new criteria, Le Bristol Paris remains at the top of the palace scene. On the heels of a six-year, €150 million renovation, Le Bristol has unveiled a bevy of additions and enhancements: redesigned, eighteenth century-inspired room and suite interiors; new restaurant spaces; a seven-story wing; a completely reenvisioned 13,000-square-foot courtyard garden; the Pierre-Yves Rochon-designed Le Bar du Bristol; reimagined signature suites; and the introduction of a more than 2,500-square-foot honeymoon suite facing the Eiffel Tower.

While completely refreshed, Le Bristol Paris 2.0 still oozes the classic opulence that made it famous when it opened in 1925. Nips and tucks have only enhanced the distinctly traditional glamour that today converges as the living reality of a “Once Upon a Time in Paris” storybook fantasy. (lebristolparis.com)

2 L'OISEAU BLANC AND LILI AT THE PENINSULA PARIS

Following a meticulous reinvention of its nineteenth-century Haussmanian building, the Peninsula Paris opened in August to rave reviews. And its sixth-floor, rooftop L'Oiseau Blanc restaurant and design-savvy LiLi Cantonese restaurant quickly garnered “It” status on the Paris social scene.

Thanks to the vision of Georges-Eugène Haussmann and the legacies of rulers like Louis XIV, Louis XV and Napoleon Bonaparte, an unparalleled grandeur is immortalized within the City of Light. But while embracing this historical splendor, Paris has also been swept away by a growing love affair with modernity, fostering a unique phenomenon of looking to the past, present and future to define today’s trends in architecture, design, culture and gastronomy.

From history-steeped hotel reinventions to the latest offerings in haute cuisine, what follows is our curated list of the top reasons to revisit Paris now.

1 LE BRISTOL PARIS

Paris’ hotel scene was rocked in 2011 when revamped criteria emerged for designation as an official Parisian “palace” hotel. To prove a hotel excels beyond typical five-star status, it must now meet 38 rigorous standards for excellence. This paves the way for several newcomers to enter the ranks



DINING WITH A VIEW OF THE EIFFEL TOWER AT L'OISEAU BLANC.



The 40-seat L'Oiseau Blanc is all about the views, which are eye-level with the rooftops of Paris, in clear view of the Eiffel Tower, immersed in aviation-themed interiors that pay homage to French pilots Charles Nungesser and François Coli, who attempted the first transatlantic flight between Paris and New York (on the plane *L'Oiseau Blanc*).

Downstairs at lobby level, LiLi impresses with bold and seductive interiors that channel the theatrical elegance of the Chinese opera. Helmed by Chef Tang Chi Keung, of Michelin-starred Hei Fung Terrace fame, the restaurant presents the best in authentic Cantonese cuisine, including 15 varieties of dim sum, perfectly executed classics like Sichuan-style braised prawns and numerous Hong Kong favorites with a French twist—think wok-fried blue lobster with ginger and spring onions. (*paris.peninsula.com*)

3 PRINCE DE GALLES

Two years after shuttering its doors for an extensive restoration, the Prince de Galles, a Luxury Collection Hotel, has re-emerged with the roaring twenties ambience and art deco panache of its original incarnation. Decked out in Makassar ebony, Saint Laurent marble floors and intricate mosaics, the rooms are plush, elegant and perfectly suited for the prestigious Avenue George V neighborhood.

True to its moniker, the new Michelin-starred La Scène restaurant presents a grand performance in the form of an intimate open



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: THE DINING ROOM AT LILi; THE DINING ROOM AT ÉPICURE; THE SUBLIME CUISINE AT ÉPICURE; CHEF ÉRIC FRÉCHON AND ÉPICURE STAFF.

kitchen. Executive Chef Stéphanie Le Quellec leads a dance of French gastronomy, choreographing ingredients to unite as art on a plate. Courses are served as “Acts,” and the “Conclusion” comprises decadent desserts such as the Doyenné du Comice Pear, a candied pear over a buttery, soft biscuit topped with homemade sorbet.

Adjacent to La Scène, the Bar Les Heures boasts an equally dramatic presentation. Chef Barman Christopher Gaglione takes mixology to the next level with his innovative and interactive 1920s-inspired cocktails served tableside using antique instruments and props. You could call it the ultimate encore. (*princedegallesparis.com*)

4 ÉPICURE

French Celebrity Chef Éric Fréchon has yet another accolade under his belt, as his triple Michelin-starred restaurant, Épicure, housed at Le Bristol Paris, was deemed the “Best Hotel Restaurant of the World” 2015 by *Saveur* magazine.



THE DINING ROOM AT LA SCÈNE RESTAURANT.

COUNTER-CLOCKWISE FROM FAR RIGHT: THE PICASSO MUSEUM; WORKS OF ART IN A VARIETY OF MEDIUMS INSIDE THE MUSEUM; LE DÉJEUNER SUR L'HERBE D'APRÈS MANET.



Fréchon, a name synonymous with Parisian haute cuisine, continues to transform personal gastronomic prowess into a gourmand's paradise. Épicure's latest menu delivers on its recent designation with experiential delights such as a dish called Leeks from Ile de France, a perfectly caramelized leek in seaweed butter, partitioned by a tartare of petite White Pearl oysters; the simply titled Scallops, pillows of the sweet mollusks simmered in watercress juice with brown butter, topped with slices—not shavings—of white truffle from Alba and served over ratte potato gnocchi; and the Thyme-Lemon Honey, a celebration of honey in all forms, from fresh honeycomb to frozen honey to honey ice cream and the liquid gold

itself uniting as a single, sweet masterpiece. (*lebristolparis.com*)

5 PICASSO MUSEUM

After five years and €52 million, Musée Picasso Paris has reopened in the city's Marais district. This artistic haven is now triple in size and houses some 5,000 works by the Spanish artist and 200,000 pieces from his personal archives (though a manageable 437 are on display).

The museum's home, the seventeenth-century Hôtel Salé, has been completely restored and rearranged to parade highlights of the world's largest Picasso collection, representing the many stages of the artist's career including his blue, cubist and pop-art periods. The museum also exhibits the apex of Picasso's personal collection of work by other artists, including paintings by Cézanne, Rousseau, Renoir and Gauguin. In a city where museums err on the side of enormous, the rich but approachable Picasso Museum is a breath of fresh air. (*museepicassoparis.fr/en*) ◀◀



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