



TAKE
ME
THERE



While thousands of tourists flock to Paris each year in search of The Eiffel Tower and Montmartre, ask a local where to head and the real gems start to shine through as The Louvre and The Seine make way for the delights of The Marais district. Likened to New York's west Village, it's here in the third arrondissement that Parisians are enjoying an altogether more avant-garde vibe, in the heart of the capital's Bobo region – or bourgeois bohemian.

First stop is our hotel, Hotel du Petit Moulin. Once a bakery, the first in Paris I'm told, this renovated cornerstone building has been transformed by none other than designer Christian Lacroix, into a stylish retreat perfect for a weekend's stop. Each room is decorated in the fashionista's vibrant and colourful style, as modern chrome finishing sits artfully alongside gilded Versailles-inspired mirrors.

Heading out into the Bobo quarter with our friendly guide, we're greeted by street markets and boutiques, perfumeries and chocolatiers, the sights and smells on offer give an authentic feel to the buzzing district. Having worked up an appetite, it's not long before we delve into the heart of Parisian cuisine. For contemporary faire, Pamela Popo offers perfectly formed mains made with the freshest ingredients. The menu, as you would expect in Paris is as poetic as it is tasty.

Paris in style

Janelle Butterfield explores the bohemian quarter of Paris, with food at the top of her list

For budding chefs, true immersion can be found at La Cuisine Paris – a great place to while away an afternoon learning to cook French food with the masters. The Seine provides a suitable backdrop for this cooking school where our chef guides us through our paces, creating warm fresh bread and sumptuous ciabatta, all hot from the oven with a glass of white wine.

Often flying the flag for all things cool, it's no surprise then that this part of Paris offers up everything from kitsch pop-up art galleries to cat cafés and speakeasy-style bars, hidden behind wardrobes. We delve into hip restaurant Derriere, where the tongue-in-cheek menu is as entertaining as their cartoon-like éclairs.

Food aside, we head north of the city to the Saint-Ouen flea market where antiques and arts and crafts sit alongside furniture and vintage fashion. After getting lost in the winding lanes, we stop off at Phillip Starck's latest spot, Ma Cocotte, which is heaving at

the rafters with cool young Parisians.

One of the real joys of Paris, though, is perhaps the commute. Fully immersed in the laid-back vibe, it's fewer than three hours before we find ourselves transported back to St Pancras feeling relaxed, well-fed and ever so slightly bohemian.

TRIP NOTES

✦ Hotel du Petit Moulin offers overnight stays from £160 per room per night, based on two sharing on a B&B basis – hotelpetitmoulinparis.com; Context Travel leads 2.5 hour 'Bobo' walking tours of The Marais from £65pp – contexttravel.com; Eurostar operates up to 18 daily services from London St Pancras to Paris Gare du Nord. Return fares are from £69. Standard Premier return fares from £189 – eurostar.com