

TRIP  
NOTES

Eurostar operates up to 21 daily services from London St Pancras International to Paris Gare Du Nord. Tickets are available from [eurostar.com](http://eurostar.com) or call 03432 186 186. Stays at Hotel du Petit Moulin start from €205 per room per night, based on two sharing on a B&B basis. [hotelpetitmoulinparis.com](http://hotelpetitmoulinparis.com)

J'ADORE  
PARIS

*Romance, art and gastronomy are in store on this perfect city break*

Words VICKY MAYER



**W**hat is it about Paris that's so special? Perhaps it's the grand buildings and wide boulevards, or the specialist shops and cosy cafes that seem to spring up on every street corner. Or maybe it's the views of the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame, simply made for endless instagram posts.

I hadn't visited in over a decade and travelling to the French capital not long after their horrendous terror attack left me a bit jumpy, but once there it was clear that this proud city is determined to carry on with business as usual. If anything, everyone just seemed to be that little bit friendlier and pleased that visitors were back to enjoy their beautiful city.

I travelled to Gare Du Nord on the incredibly comfortable Eurostar. My boyfriend, who accompanied me, had never been on the train and like all first timers he couldn't get over how quick and easy the service is. From the station we took an easy metro hop to the Marais, our home for the next two nights at the extraordinary Hotel du Petit Moulin. This small boutique hotel, which was once a boulangerie, now boasts rooms decorated by Christian Lacroix. Forget minimalism, each room is a shrine to



The Hotel du Petit Moulin is positioned perfectly to explore the alleyways of Paris, whilst inside the rooms are decorated by Christian Lacroix

maximalism with clashing colours and crazy artwork. It shouldn't work but it does and it's an extraordinarily fun place to spend a weekend in Paris.

Situated right in the heart of the Marais, it's the perfect spot to explore the district's chic boutiques and hidden away wine bars and restaurants. We went native, choosing tiny cafes in even smaller alleyways to sample le menu du jour, before hitting the chicest of shops – everything from an olive oil store to a cashmere only boutique. The nearby Musee Picasso National is a must too. Only four minutes walk from the hotel, it houses some of his earliest work including *The Little Girl In A Red Dress* and many self-portraits.

It would be easy to spend a week in this district alone, but the city beckoned and we'd decided to splash out and treat ourselves to dinner at Le Relais in Paris' famous Plaza Athenee hotel. Situated on Avenue Montaigne, this exquisite hotel is popular with visiting celebrities from all over the world. At dinner we felt pretty special too, being treated to classic five star French cuisine that's so difficult to find in London. You simply can't dress up enough at this stylish restaurant and it gave us a great uptown spin to our trip.

Back in the comfort of our hotel I couldn't wait to prop up the bar with a Pernod, ponder how the Parisians manage to stay so chic 24/7 and plan another trip tout suite.