

SHOPPING

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SHOPPING

When it comes to shopping, Paris naturally has it all: large boulevards lined with international chains, luxury avenues with designer fashion, famous *grands magasins* (department stores) and fabulous flea markets (see p212). But the real charm of Parisian shopping resides in a peripatetic stroll through the side streets, where tiny speciality shops and quirky boutiques selling everything from strawberry-scented Wellington boots to candles scented like heaven alternate with cafés, galleries and churches. These original addresses are what we focus on in this chapter.

As in many capital cities, shops are spread out across different neighbourhoods, inspiring very different styles of shopping. If what the French do best – fashion (see p41) – is what you're after, tread the *haute couture* (high fashion), luxury jewellery and designer perfume boardwalks in the Étoile and Champs-Élysées. For original fashion, both street and vintage, the addictive maze of boutique shopping in the Marais and St-Germain will keep you on your toes. For the full lowdown on shopping areas in Paris see p193.

Fashion is but one wallet temptation. Parisian shopping is an exquisite Pandora's Box of fine food, wine and tea, books, beautiful stationery, fine art, antiques and original collectables. Be it a music box to enchant, a hammock to string between trees or a truffle to shave on pasta, you won't be stuck for gifts and souvenirs to take home. For our favourite gift ideas under €25 see p195.

Should you not look like a millionaire, trying to raise a smile out of frosty, poker-faced staff in certain designer boutiques (or indeed attracting their attention to let you in; most require you to buzz) can be disheartening. To navigate what can be an intimidating scene, gen up on our shopping tips on p194.

Costs

With its catwalk fashion and boutique fare, Parisian shopping is not really for the dedicated bargain hunter. But there are bargains to be had – at the city's clutch of flea markets and twice a year during the annual *soldes* (sales) which see prices slashed by as much as 50%: sales usually last a month, starting in mid-January and again in mid-June.

CONSUMER TAXES & BARGAINING

Non-EU residents can get a TVA (VAT; sales tax) refund of up to 19.6% on spends of more than €175 in any one store on one day; see p404.

Some larger department stores and duty-free shops might give discounts of 10% to foreign passport holders if asked; otherwise bargaining is reserved for flea markets.

Opening Hours

Opening hours are generally between 10am and 7pm Monday to Saturday. Smaller shops often shut all day on Monday; on other days, their proprietors may close from noon to around 2pm for a long and lazy lunch. Many larger stores hold *nocturnes* (late-night shopping) on Thursday, remaining open until around 10pm. For Sunday shopping, the

Champs-Élysées (p201), Montmartre (p203), Marais (p205) and Bastille (p210) areas are the liveliest.

LOUVRE & LES HALLES

Though you'll find any number of specialist boutiques selling everything from music boxes to kitchenware here, the 1e and 2e arrondissements are mostly about fashion. Indeed, the Sentier garment district has become a centre for fashion, while rue Étienne Marcel, place des Victoires and rue du Jour beside the Église St-Eustache (Map p76) offer prominent labels and shoe shops. Nearby rue Montmartre and rue Tiquetonne are known for their streetwear and avant-garde designs. Les Halles itself, once the city's food market, is now a vast underground shopping complex. It's flanked to the east by the sleaze and sports stores of rue St-Denis, and to the south by the chain stores of rue de Rivoli. The easternmost part of the 1e around Palais Royal is far more conservative, with fancy period and label fashion.

Most of the many museums in this neighbourhood have excellent in-house shops. For a preview of what to expect, check out the *Les Boutiques de Musées* (www.boutiquesdemusees.fr/en) website.