

# DESIGNER HOTELS IN PARIS

by John Brunton

## THE PARIS HOTEL SCENE IS GOING THROUGH A VERY EXCITING PHASE RIGHT NOW.

For those who prefer the great luxury palaces of the City of Light, then there are always the likes of the Crillon, Georges V, Prince de Galles, Ritz and Plaza Athenee. And even at this ultra-exclusive end of the market, there are also new and exciting possibilities with serious renovations transforming the once-venerable Royal Monceau and Meurice. But the big new trend has been the creation of a new brand of hotel. Paris has gone one step further than many world capitals by taking the 'boutique hotel' concept to another level by creating "Designer Hotels". The chic, trend-conscious French have taken their fashion designers and style gurus and given them a free-hand to develop a highly original kind of hotel. Some are as expensive as the Palace Hotels, but then the experience of staying in an Azzedine Alaïa apartment or a Christian Lacroix bedroom, is completely different from being cosseted in the luxury world of a Four Seasons hotel. And not all of them are ruinously expensive. Discerning travellers to Paris now have the chance to choose a highly original place to stay, from the hotel that started the new trend, the Costes, all across the city, to the latest to-die-for location, the Murano.

## MURANO

13 Boulevard du Temple, 75003

tel: 0142712000, fax: 0142712101

[www.muranoresort.com](http://www.muranoresort.com)

double 400 euros

The Murano, which styles itself as an "Urban Resort - where sleeping is not enough", is undoubtedly the most original hotel in Paris right now. Its creators have gone one step beyond all the newest trends of the city's designer hotels. First there is the location, opening an ultra-fashionable resort in the terminally unfashionable Republique neighbourhood, though fortunately the bars of rue Oberkampf and the boutiques of Bastille are not too far away. On checking in, don't expect a key, as the receptionist will take a digital imprint of your finger, which magically opens your door, and once inside the futuristic bedroom, there are five different light



colours to choose from. Guests sit around a six-metre long minimalist fireplace in the bright white lobby, while the cool cocktail bar serves 120 different vodkas accompanied by funky lounge

music chosen by the resident DJ. The Murano's restaurant has already become one of the hippest places to be seen dining, and their young chef turns traditional French cuisine upside down, with surprising dishes like oysters served with veal sweetbreads, rabbit stuffed with calamari, or steamed skate fish served with a cardamon bouillon.

## L'HOTEL DE SERS

41 Avenue Pierre 1 de Serbie, 75008

tel: 0153237575, fax: 0153237576

[www.hoteldesers.com](http://www.hoteldesers.com)

double 450 euros



The young hotelier, Thibault Vidalenc, is not yet thirty, but with the opening this year of his sleek Hotel de Sers, he has become one of the "movers and shakers" of the Paris hotel scene. Using his even younger brother, Thomas, as the architect and stylist of the eye-catching furniture, along with the fashion designer Cedric Martineau, Vidalenc has created a discrete, understated hotel that fits in perfectly with the exclusive haute-couture mentality of the Champs-Élysées. Built in the 1880's as a private mansion for the Marquis de Sers, the hotel looks almost nondescript from the outside, but once inside the long entrance hall, guests are enveloped in a luxurious but cosy ambiance, where classic Louis XV chairs sit alongside funky psychedelic sofas. The top floor suites have splendid views over Paris, and the bar and elegant restaurant are popular meetings places for both smart-suited businessmen and chic fashionistas.

## LE GENERAL HOTEL

5 Rue Rampon, 75011

tel: 0147004157, fax: 0147002156

[www.legeneralhotel.com](http://www.legeneralhotel.com)

double 160 euros

Le General is a brilliant alternative for the smart traveller who seeks a cool fashionable address to stay but doesn't want to blow all his budget on the hotel room. Hidden away in a quiet backstreet off the Place de la Republique - not a million miles away from the Murano - the General succeeds in mixing cutting-edge design with a friendly, down-to-earth service that makes the guest feel relaxed and at home, without any feeling of pretentiousness. Some of the rooms are seriously offbeat - imagine a small suite with a sliding window in the bedroom that guests climb through to enter the bathroom. This is not the only clever use of limited space, as the salon used for serving breakfast is transmuted each afternoon into a lounge bar serving killer cocktails, with the obligatory in-house DJ playing jazzy music. There is also a well-equipped fitness, sauna and massage centre. And for the ultimate irreverent souvenir, most guests can't resist buying one of the hotel's mascots - a silver and pink rubber duck for the bath.



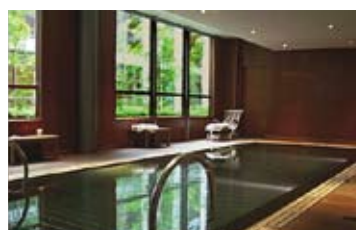
## L'HOTEL COSTES

239 Rue Saint-Honore, 75001

tel: 0142445000, fax: 0142445001

[www.hotelcostes.com](http://www.hotelcostes.com)

double 400 euros



There is no doubting that Hotel Costes began the trend of designer hotels in Paris, and it remains the preferred address for movie stars, fashion designers, rock bands and anyone keen to rub shoulders with international celebrities and wealthy enough to afford the room rates. It is difficult to pinpoint what is the exact secret of Costes. The interior designer Jacques Garcia made it the flagship of his flamboyant baroque style, which has now been copied all over the world. The Costes music CD's are played - and pirated - in discos and lounge bars on every continent. This is a hotel with attitude, where even the bellboy looks like a budding actor, so don't expect the friendliest of service. The brooding,

dark bar is perfect for avoiding the paparazzi, and a reservation is de rigueur for the restaurant, although the cuisine doesn't quite live up to the prices - shrimps roasted over Thai herbs for 34 euros, accompanied by a classic lettuce salad for a mere 14 euros. The rooms are all decorated in a slightly different style, and Garcia succeeds in creating a decor that is rich and elegant but still cosy and comfortable. And then there is the subterranean pool and spa - definitely the best place for a swim in Paris.

## PARK HYATT PARIS-VENDOME

5 rue de la Paix, 75002

tel: 0158711234, fax: 0158711235

[www.paris.vendome.hyatt.com](http://www.paris.vendome.hyatt.com)

double 450 euros

The international hotel chain, Hyatt, gave more or less carte blanche for the first European project of famed American architect and interior designer Ed Tuttle. The aim has been to create the first "designer palace hotel", to compete directly with the likes of the Crillon and Plaza Athenee. Renowned for his creation of the unique Aman hotels on Phuket and Bali, Tuttle has taken a somewhat different approach for the Paris-Vendome. Whereas his hotels in Asia have always taken the visitor aback on first sight, the Hyatt here has an almost gentle feeling as you enter a minimalist reception, marked only by a large bronzelike sculpture by the French artist Roseline Granet. Her distinctive creations could have been inspired by Giacometti, and Tuttle uses her work as the leit-motif for the whole hotel, with every room featuring at least one of her artworks. Although it doesn't seem apparent from the outside, the hotel has actually been formed from five different Belle Epoque nineteenth century buildings, and has nearly two hundred rooms. There is a beautiful marble fireplace in the lobby - much favoured by cigar smokers - a small bar and busy, casual coffee-shop style restaurant, and a delightful gourmet restaurant where diners can eat inside in winter around an open grill, and outside in a glass-covered gazebo complete with olive trees during the summer. Be warned that the chef patissier creates an utterly irresistible desserts trolley.





## LE PERSHING HALL

49 rue Pierre-Charron, 75008

tel: 0158365800, fax: 0158365801

[www.pershinghall.com](http://www.pershinghall.com)

double 390 euros



An exclusive Champs-Elysees location is just the tip of the iceberg of the attractions offered

by the recently-opened Pershing Hall. This was originally premises of the American Legion, and are named after the famed Second World War hero, General Pershing. The feel here is similar to Murano, a hotel that wants to be different from all the others. Although the Pershing Hall is large - with a vast lounge bar and restaurant - there are only 26 rooms, and the person who created this unique interior decor is another of France's style icons, Andree Putman. It is a long time since Putman shocked the world with her audacious transformations of the Musee d'Orsay here in Paris and the Palazzo Grassi in Venice, but with the Pershing it is clear that she has lost none of her cutting edge. The restaurant is simply stunning. Tables are set in an enclosed courtyard in the middle of the building, which rises up on all sides as far as the top floor and an open sky - with a retracting glass roof for winter. One wall is covered with lush jungle vegetation, giving the impression you are dining in the glass house of a botanical garden. On the first floor the mood alters completely, with a dimly lit lounge bar and salon where moody red lighting, minimalist furniture and the obligatory DJ set a funkier tone.

## HOTEL le A

4 rue d'Artois, 75008

tel: 0142569999, fax: 0142569990

[www.paris-hotel-a.com](http://www.paris-hotel-a.com)

double 320 euros

The A also has only 26 rooms, but both the style and ambiance are markedly different than the Pershing Hall. The highly distinctive design of this hotel is a result of a collaboration between an architect, Frederic Mechiche, and an artist, Fabrice Hybert, who succeed in both complementing and contrasting each other. You get the impression that if the architect has worked alone, the A would be a shrine to minimalist black and white. The salon reading room has black sofas and white walls, the breakfast salon and evening lounge bar offers white furniture against matt black tables. But the joker that upsets this colour coordination is the vivid graffiti-like artist, Hybert, whose vast canvases and frescoes break up the background in every part of the hotel. Each



room has a different painting, a different theme, and the result is very similar to the Art'Otels in Budapest and Berlin, which showcase the works of a single artist. This being Paris, though, the A has also made its name as a fashionable rendez-vous for the media and fashion crowd, who fill up its bar from the early evening onwards.

## L'HOTEL DU PETIT MOULIN

29 rue de Poitou, 75003

tel: 0142741010, fax: 0142741097

[www.hoteldupetitmoulin.com](http://www.hoteldupetitmoulin.com)

double 180 euros

Most people who pass by the Petit Moulin don't even realise it is a hotel. The owners have cleverly left untouched the beautiful Belle Epoque facade of a "boulangerie", reputed to be the oldest bakery in the city, that has now been transformed into one of Paris's most sought-after addresses. The reason everyone wants to stay here is quite simple, the decor and interior design have been created by one of France's most famous haute-couture designers, Christian Lacroix. The designer has clearly enjoyed himself decorating this jewel-bow of a hotel. Guests



will discover all the Lacroix trademarks - voluptuous velvets and silks, whimsical sketches, surreal photos, operatic masks and costumes. the breakfast room and evening bar is especially fun, a contrast of an old-fashioned bistro with traditional zinc bar, and stark modern chairs in bright primary colours. There are only seventeen rooms, each one individually decorated by Lacroix, who claims that he has created seventeen different way of experiencing the Marais. And the price really is incredibly competitive compared to many of the other designer hotels in town.

## HOTEL BOURG TIBOURG

19 rue du Bourg-Tibourg, 75004

tel: 0142784739, fax: 0140290700

[www.bourgtibourg.com](http://www.bourgtibourg.com)

double 200 euros



This tiny hotel in the heart of the Marais resembles a designer doll's house, and it is a real find in terms of value for money. Owned by another member of the Costes family, though independent from the Faubourg St Honore hotel, the interior design again bears the imprint of Jacques Garcia. Here he has created an exotic, oriental world, with perfumed candles and incense, Moorish furniture with delicate inlaid mother-of-pearl, Murano glass chandeliers, and reclining sofas that look as if they came from a Sultan's harem. The mood is irresistibly romantic, especially for those who splash out on one of the small suites that have their own Byzantine salon. As space is strictly limited here, don't expect the rooms to be extra spacious - though some do have small balconies - and there is neither a restaurant nor bar. But then the Marais is brimming with eating and drinking possibilities. Breakfast is served either in an ancient vaulted cellar, or in a tiny enclosed garden if the weather is fine.