

Four of the best hip hotels for springtime in Paris, by Francesca Syz

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HOTEL NOTRE DAME 5TH ARRONDISSEMENT

The fashion designer Christian Lacroix first turned his hand to hotels in 2005 when he decorated all 17 bedrooms at Hôtel du Petit Moulin in the Marais in spectacular, eccentric explosions of colour and Baroque-meets-1960s style, themed around the history of its neighbourhood. He went on to design Hôtel le Bellechasse in Saint Germain in 2008, and has just decorated the 26-room Hôtel Notre Dame, an existing hotel given a fresh lease of life under new management. The Notre Dame is brilliantly located (the clue is in the name) on quai Saint-Michel on the Left Bank. Expect rooms with themes such as 'divine garden', 'angels' and 'the magi kings', furniture upholstered in royal-blue velvet, quirky Lacroix-designed 'cowhide' wallpaper, floral and striped curtains, and period wooden beams. There's no restaurant but instead an L-shaped lounge with a resident-only bar for simple breakfasts and cocktails. Ask for a cathedral-facing corner room and you will have one of the finest hotel views in Paris.

The details Doubles from €230 (00 331 43 54 20 43; hotelnotredameparis.com).



MAMA SHELTER 20TH ARRONDISSEMENT Located on rue de Bagnole, moments from one of the world's most famous cemeteries, Père Lachaise, the 172-room Mama Shelter has an interesting pedigree. It was dreamt up by the Trigano family (co-founders of Club Med) and the French philosopher Cyril Aouizerate and designed by Philippe Starck. The result is a bit cool, a bit bohemian and very, very 'Paris'. In the bedrooms, industrial chic polished concrete walls provide a backdrop for large, comfortable beds and desks with cosy lamp lights ('for writing love letters' – this is Paris, remember). The ground floor brasserie-style restaurant, cocktail bar and terrace is simple and functional and has just started serving delicious pizzas from noon until 7pm; there is also a very good Sunday brunch. Forgotten your toothbrush? You can pick one up from the hotel shop, along with a Taschen coffee-table book, a French arthouse DVD and other essential travel accessories. A nice touch is the hotel's fleet of bicycles, motorbikes, scooters and Smart cars for rent.

The details Doubles from €99 (00 331 43 48 48 48; mamashelter.com).

HOTEL JULES 9TH ARRONDISSEMENT

While Ian Schrager is credited as the pioneer of the boutique hotel, the Hong Kong-born, Paris-based hotelier Grace Leo Andrieu should definitely share the glory. Her renovation and relaunch of Hôtel Montalembert in 1989 had a major impact on the Paris hotel scene and, since then, she has opened some of the world's best small hotels. Of her two latest, both in Paris, our favourite is Hôtel Jules on rue La Fayette, a stylish, vintage hybrid of 1950s, 60s and 70s interior design, featuring ancient trunks-turned-contemporary wardrobes, zebra-skin rugs and pieces of sculpture including ceramic lips that hang on the wall. The rooms are warm, bright and effortlessly stylish. While there is no restaurant in the conventional sense, there is an American diner-style breakfast room in the basement or they will deliver it to your room free of charge. An intimate, comfortable lobby bar is a great place to start the evening. The hotel's incredibly friendly staff are the antithesis of snooty and are always at hand to help you plan your day and make reservations. **The details** Doubles from €150 (00 331 42 85 05 44; hoteljules.com).



HOTEL DE SERS 8TH ARRONDISSEMENT This beautiful, stylish hotel near the Champs-Élysées is like a box of chocolates from a fairy tale. Once the private mansion of the very grand Marquis de Sers, the building's sweeping picture galleries, grand staircases and salons have been beautifully restored, and you will find walls, beds and freestanding baths in cool white offset by scrumptious fuchsia-coloured carpets, ruby sofas, cushions with bright botanical graphics and richly coloured historic oil portraits. At the restaurant, which overlooks the tree-lined courtyard and has a heavenly terrace for summer dining, an exciting new chef is cooking up a storm, championing modern French organic food. Don't miss his Sunday brunch. The cosy, candlelit, wood-paneled S'Bar, whose centrepiece is a carrara marble bar, has cucumber-cool cream-coloured armchairs and lighting that flips between blue, fuchsia, orange, green and red. For serious Brownie points, book one of two panoramic suites or the immense seventh-floor apartment suite, all of which have glorious terraces. **The details** Doubles from €550, but book online and you will find significantly lower rates (00 331 53 23 75 75; hoteldesers.com).