

The Travel Issue

A Perfect Trip, Pre-Pandemic



PARIS
BUDAPEST
BARCELONA
CASABLANCA

This past March (2020) I was blessed with a trip of a lifetime. Not only did I travel to Paris, Budapest, Barcelona, and Casablanca, I traveled to these magical locations with my best friend: my mom. I've decided to share some stories about my crazy adventures through Europe and Africa in hopes that you can travel there with me, figuratively, until it is safe to visit them once again.



Hotel Bachaumont
Paris 2nd Arr.
March 5, 2020

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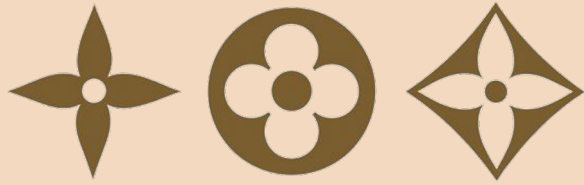
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Parisian Shopping: Louis Vuitton

Let me begin with my favorite place in the world: Paris. I traveled to Paris when I was in high school, but I was eager to make a return so I could visit all the fashion must-sees after completing a Bachelor's in Fashion Merchandising and Management. Not only was it fitting, but it was also fabulous! My mom is (almost) as big a shopaholic as myself, so sending us to Paris with empty suitcases was a dangerous idea, one I am most grateful for. Among my favorite shopping experiences while in Paris, was our visit to the Louis Vuitton store in Place Vendôme. It was a short walk from our boutique hotel, Hotel

3 Bachaumont (I'll share more





about the hotel and its charm in a bit). We spent over three hours in the three-level luxury store.



My mom and I felt like princesses as we were treated like royals. Sales associates served us sparkling water and champagne. I tried on loafer heels from LV's new collection which had been released during fashion week just a few days before. I was close to purchasing the 3 loafers, but it was only our first day in Paris – I needed to save some of my budget for other fashion finds. My mom on the other hand left with a Speedy bag, wallet, and matching bracelet. She was due for a new bag – it had been over 20 years since she bought her first Louis. It was well deserved, considering that she willingly volunteered to take over 5 flights in ten days with me!





The hotel we lodged in, Hotel Bachaumont, was a charming building that was transformed from a hospital in the 1800's to a chic yet welcoming hotel. Although the rooms were tiny (it's Paris – what can you expect!), the continental breakfast and superb service made up for the lack of square feet. This was no Holiday Inn stale bagels and three-day-old donuts breakfast. This was a feast for carb-loving, coffee-drinking tourists like my

mom and me. Our daily cappuccinos and sweet leches were strong and satisfying, and the array of pastries made my belly smile. In the evening, the breakfast area turned into a hip bar scene that let off an air of wealth and tasteful fun. My mom and I had wine at the bar after a long day filled with shopping, stuffing our faces with French macarons, and sipping tea at George V Four Seasons. It was a tough life, but one I wouldn't mind

5 returning to.





Bon Appétit

Paris by Mouth

And so the adventure through the City of Lights continued. We let our appetites lead us through the cobble-stoned streets on our food and wine tour, fittingly titled “Paris by Mouth.” We landed on the “Taste of Marais” tour because of its proximity to our hotel.

A short walk later, passing dainty floral shops and fruit street carts, we met with our intimate tour group of 6. Our tour guide, Andrés, handpicked about half a dozen pastry and decadent specialty shops that, to say modestly, satisfied our adventurous tastebuds. Here are some of my favorite stops we made on the tour...



For Bread...

Bakery: Tout Autour de Pain

Address: 134 rue de Turenne

This corner bakery serves some of the most buttery croissants and best traditional French baguettes in Paris. Be sure to try the Vanetais bread. It pairs great with blue cheese.



For Chocolate...

Chocolatier: Tout Autour de Pain

Address: 134 rue de Turenne



This corner bakery serves some of the most buttery croissants and best traditional French baguettes in Paris. Be sure to try the Vanetais bread. It pairs great with blue cheese.

For Modern Macarrons...

Bakery: Pierre Herme

Address: 30, rue de Bretagne, 75003

Called the Picasso of macaroons, the head pastry chef at this bakery has redesigned the centuries-old dessert by combining unexpected flavors. The unique presentations leave the customer wanting to taste test every pastry in the shop.





For Cheese...

Location: Jouannault Cheese Shop
Address: 39 rue de Bretagne, 75003

We tried a bunch of cheeses, most of which I've never heard of. Here are a few of my favorites:

I. Pelardon AOP

(goat, Languedoc-Roussillon, aged 2-3 weeks)

Pelardon has a very creamy texture, with a milky and nutty lingering aftertaste.

II. Livarot AOP

(cow, Normandie, aged 1-3 months)

Nicknamed “the Colonel” because it's bound with five stripes of sedge grass that resemble the stripes on a military uniform, Livarot is a strong-smelling washed rind cheese.

III. Beaufort AOP

(cow, Rhône-Alpes, aged 36 months)

Made in the French Alps since the 14th century, Beaufort d'été is produced using only summer milk. Beaufort d'Alpage aka Beaufort Chalet d'Alpage, is produced using only summer milk from cows grazing above 1500m altitude where the grass is considered premium grazing land.



IV. Brie de Meaux AOP

(cow, Île-de-France, aged 6-8 weeks)

Brie is my favorite cheese and it's not just because we share the same name. This specific complex raw milk cheese that can be infused with flavors of mushrooms, earth, leaves, cauliflower, beef stock, or oysters. Some longer-aged versions have a strong ammonia smell which a few connoisseurs like. The hand-ladled technique uses a perforated ladle (dates back to 12th century) that allows the curds to be transported to the mold unbroken and achieve the smooth, voluptuous custard-like interior.

V. Blue Txiki Farmhouse

(Sheep, Basque country, aged 10 weeks)

This farmhouse cheese is a mild version of blue cheese. It was creamy and lightly salted.

II



To Wine Down...

Wine Shop: La Cave de Turenne Wine Shop

Address: La cave de Turenne 80, rue Turenne, 75003

We tried a few different wines which we paired with the cheese above.

Here are my top 3 picks:

1. Vin de France, Montagne de Strass 2018 from
Domaine des Trouilleres
(100% Chardonnay from Cotes d'Auvergne)

2. Vin de France, "Les Cliquets 2017" from Domaine
Opi d'Aqui
(100% Grenache from Languedoc-Roussillon)

3. Gaillac AOC, Duras 2016, from Domaine Plageoles
(100% Duras from the Southwest of France)



Don't Spill the Tea: It's French!



A La Galerie is the most elegant tea lounge I've encountered. Tea at the Four Seasons Hotel George V Paris is the type of experience I routinely daydream about in the middle of a Zoom class meeting. The smell of the sweet Earl Grey, the taste of decadent pastries, and the crunchiness of a fresh afternoon sandwich are a few of the mini memories that sink into my mind when I reminisce my time at A La Galerie.

The room is a treat in itself. The walls are decorated with 19th-century art and Flemish tapestries are thoughtfully hung on the far wall. The floor-to-ceiling windows provide an abundance of natural light which reflects off the giant vases toppling over with fuchsia roses. Large chandeliers hung above me on that perfect afternoon and exquisitely detailed carpets sat below my suede mules.



My mom and I divulged in the George V High Tea experience which included hors d'oeuvre, starters, pastries, and of course, tea. We started with mini lobster rolls, a smoked salmon waffle, and the most elegant avocado toast. From the bakery came a pink praline brioche, buckwheat and chocolate biscuits, and coffee religieuse. The pastries were equally as delightful, including a Sicilian candied citron tart, Hazelnut cookie, and French custard pie.

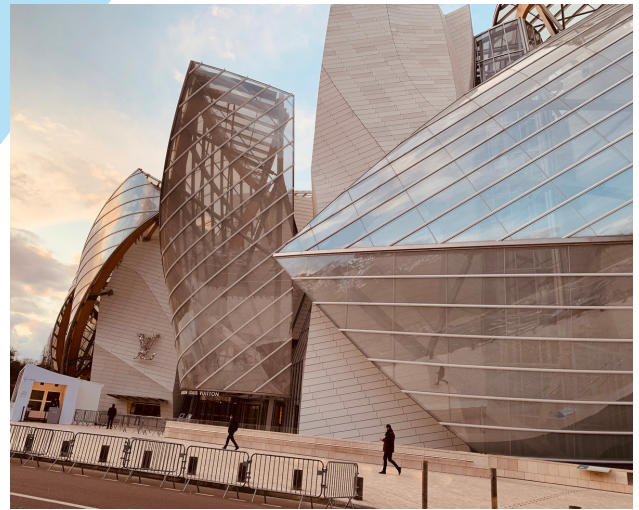


Our waiter was extra sweet and treated us with a raspberry chocolate cake, and I mean an entire cake. We took the leftovers back to our hotel to munch on for a late-night snack. My piece of advice? When in Paris, indulge yourself!



FOUNDATION LOUIS VUITTON

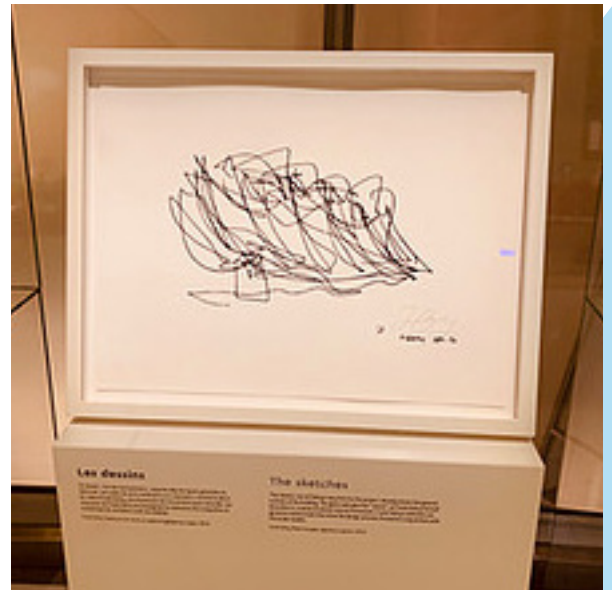
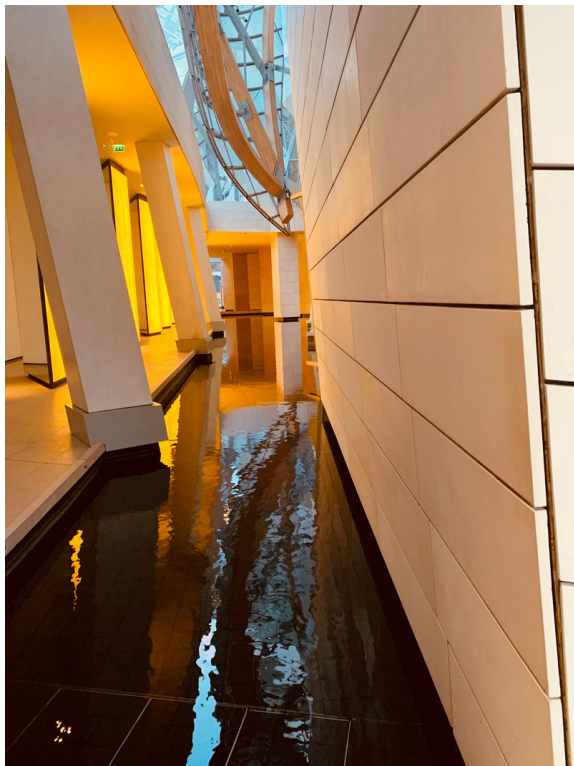
The Louis Vuitton Foundation is an architectural masterpiece. Famous architect, Frank Gehry, is the genius behind the foundation's intricate and mesmerizing structure. Gehry, an avid sailor, took inspiration from a 1911 yacht when designing the foundation. He made a series of sketches or scribbles that showcased the essence of the soon-to-be building. Completed in October 2014, Gehry describes the building as “an iceberg enveloped by glass sails.”



The construction of the puzzle-like building is sheer brilliance. Over 3,600 giant glass panels were cut precisely to create the perfect curve for each of the twelve ‘sails.’ The glass structures are supported by a combination of steel and wood framework that provides warmth and modernizes the space.

After riding up a clear elevator, I was exploring a vibrant terrace with panoramic views of Parisian landmarks like the Eiffel Tower. The ground is landscaped with exotic plants, bamboo-leaf oaks, and cherry trees.

Gehry also played with light and water in the building's design. I came across a beautiful pond where a white concrete pillar reflected against the dark water, creating a bold contrast that looked simple, yet felt mildly complex. Your thoughts could easily get lost in that water. It was stunning.



Even though the building was large and open, it felt welcoming and warm. There are so many more details you can find out about the Louis Vuitton Foundation, but I'll stop here for now.

Yves Saint Laurent Museum

The Yves Saint Laurent museum is a must for fashion-lovers when in Paris. The museum is intimate in nature. The small rooms and hallways are painted black, a stark contrast to the black and white photographs matted white on the walls. The exhibit my mom and I walked through was on Betty Catroux & Yves Saint Laurent, titled “Feminin Singulier.” Catroux was YSL’s muse, partner, and friend. The exhibit told the complex story of their relationship from start to end. One of my favorite parts of the walk-through was a short-
17 film in which the now

75-year-old Betty Catroux recalls her time with Saint Laurent. Her blunt humor and French finesse left me smiling. Catroux to YSL is like Kaia Gerber to Karl Lagerfeld. She wore YSL on and off the runway. She was a walking billboard of the designer and I live for the edgy style she still carries today.



Another exciting part of the museum was the replication of YSL's design studio. The rendering included his actual sketches and the room overflowed with fabric swatches, muslin suits, brilliant sequins, portfolios, and books.

If you want a taste of fashion history while in Paris that will only take no more than an hour, I highly recommend visiting the museum. When there, be sure to pick up one of the many books in the bookstore. I bought one on YSL and Marrakech. It was packed with beautiful images and stories. It wasn't until he traveled to the beautiful Moroccan city that Saint Laurent incorporated color into his designs. He wrote "I was stunned when I saw Marrakech for the first time. Above all by its colours. This city opened my eyes to colour."



Budapest Must-Do's

The trip continued from the bustling streets of Paris to the bustling streets of Budapest. The capital of Hungary, Budapest is a city stuffed with a rich history filled with drama and excitement. Here are a few of my favorite parts for this 3-day leg of our trip.

1. Stay at Hotel Corinthia

Saying au revoir to Paris was difficult, but saying hello to the giant hotel rooms in Hotel Corinthia quickly took our minds off missing champagne in front of the Eiffel Tower at Cafe de l'homme. The hotel rooms were spacious, to be humble. Walking into Hotel Corinthia was an experience in itself. The tall heavy doors opened (by the doorman in a full tuxedo) up to a vast foyer filled with mystical floral arrangements and a **19** backdrop of what seemed



like an endless staircase leading to the gates of Heaven. The restaurants in the hotel are also worthwhile.

2. Get your Back Rubbed at the Royal Spa

The Royal Spa is actually attached to the hotel. It was built in 1886! The Art Deco-style tiles surround a beautiful pool area. Unfortunately, the spa pool was closed for renovations when we visited, but we were still able to get massages. My mom and I opted for Thai massages. We were escorted in a beautiful stone

elevator to hotel rooms where our bodies were contorted into shapes I didn't think were possible. The masseuses were maybe 4'10 women from Thailand who gave an authentic and magical 90-minute massage. Life-changing, and I'm not overexaggerating here.



3. Explore the Jewish Quarters

I won't give you a long history lesson here, but Budapest was once a divided country, with Catholics and Jews in constant debate. The Jewish Quarters in Budapest is a great way to experience the culture of the locals. The food is wonderful, the shops are quaint, and people are super friendly.

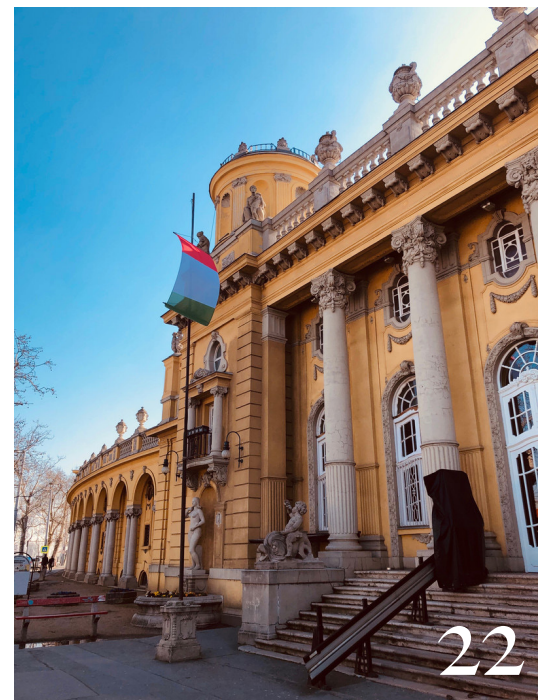


4. Take a Dip in the Szechenyi Thermal Baths

I always saw Instagram photos of the thermal baths, and I had to give them a try. The Szechenyi baths are the largest medicinal bath in Europe and tickets are under 20 euros. In addition to the outdoor baths, there are maybe half a dozen indoor baths. You can easily get lost in the halls of the beautiful yellow building. Be sure to bring a hair cap if you wish to take laps in the lap pool. My mom and I made the mistake of not bringing any and were yelled at by the lifeguards for entering the pool without knowing this rule. The other baths do not require a cap, so we walked into the warm water and spun around in the natural whirlpools.

5. Walk Around Hero's Square

Heroes' Square is a short walk from the thermal baths and filled with a beautiful depiction of the past leaders in Hungary. The sheer size of the statues is magnificent. You can take a walking tour of the Square or just look up some quick facts while perusing. My mom and I opted for the latter.





6. Cruise on the Danube River

I won't give you a long history lesson here, but Budapest was once a divided country, with Catholics and Jews in constant debate. The Jewish Quarters in Budapest is a great way to experience the culture of the locals. The food is wonderful, the shops are quaint, and people are super friendly.



3. Visit the Parliament Building

The Parliament Building is one of the most architectural masterpieces I have seen. The Gothic Revival architecture and attention to detail is stunning. It was designed and built by architect Imre Steidl in 1880 and stands as a symbol of the union of Buda, Obuda, and Pest. Over half a million precious stones and 88 pounds of gold were incorporated in the design. I can't forget to mention that there are over 690 rooms!



Barcelona in 36 Hours

The third leg of our trip took us to Barcelona. Unfortunately, our time in Barcelona was limited as our flight was moved up. Instead of 3 days in the beautiful city, we were left with a mere day and a half to explore the beautiful area of Catalonia. Here are the places we visited all in one day! I hope to return to Spain after the pandemic to explore more of its beautiful history and culture.

Where to Dine:

For strong coffee & sweet treats...

There is a cute coffee and dessert place that was walking distance from our hotel called Bubo. The coffee is strong and the pastries were exquisite. I couldn't think of a more delightful way to start my morning than a cappuccino and flakey croissant.



For dinner with the locals
There is this small restaurant near
Bubo called Cal Pep, and I mean
tiny. My mom and I ate dinner there
for our only evening in Barcelona
as everyone we met highly recom-
mended it. The restaurant has no
menu written in English so we just
pointed at other patron's dishes to
make our order. In fact, a lot of the
menu isn't even written down. Just
tell the chef what you want (it's an
open kitchen layout), and they'll
make it right in front of you.



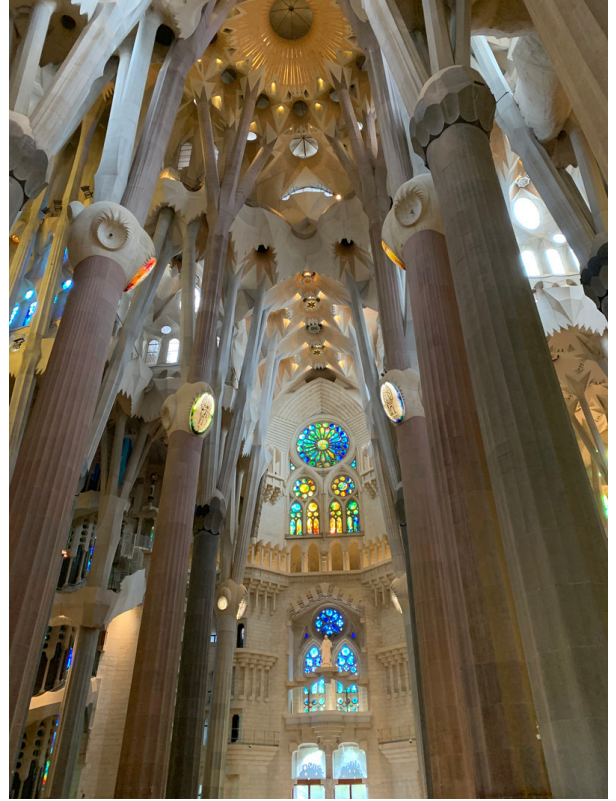
Where to Stay:

Hotel Duquesa de Cardona was a lovely
boutique hotel with generously sized rooms
paired with eccentric art and fixtures. There
is a modern bar on the first floor and a gor-
geous pool area on the roof. I highly rec-
ommend staying here. It's walking distance
from La Rambla, the central street in Bar-
celona. My mom and I spent our first few
hours in Barcelona purusing the colorful
shops along both sides of the street.



Where to Visit:

The two touristy places my mom and I visited were Park Guell and Basilica of the Sagrada Familia. We decided to do a group tour that brought us through both locations. After the 5-hour tour, my mom & I wished we just went to each location without a tour group. We didn't like having an hour break in the middle of the day for lunch when we had other activities we'd rather fill that time with, especially since our time was limited. If I were to do it again, I would just buy tickets to both attractions and walk through them at my own pace.



Where to Spend Your Evening:

We ended our night by watching a flamenco dance show. It was 100% authentic and prior to the show, some performers explained the history and technique behind flamenco dancing. This gave me a greater appreciation for the dancers' skills and obvious passion. It was super entertaining and we were served a large glass of sangria. I could not complain.



Casablanca: Taxi Ride of a Lifetime

We were only in Morocco for 1 day because we rushed back to the U.S. as the pandemic grew more serious. My mom and I stayed at the Hilton in Old Casablanca. The hotel itself was beautiful, but the surrounding area was not the safest. The hotel restaurants were beautifully designed and the food was great. There was a modern bar with eclectic art and black walls. They served fancy cocktails and complimentary peanuts.

We opted in for the breakfast the next morning. The buffet was stocked with amazing treats and traditional Moroccan dishes.



The waiter poured us sweet green tea. He started tipping the tea kettle close to the glass cup and then gradually drew his arm higher and higher until the tea was spilling into my cup from a few feet above me! It felt like a movie - I was impressed.

Since we didn't get to go on any of our planned tours or sightseeing adventures, our taxi driver showed us a few places on our drive to the airport. We made a stop at the marketplace where fresh produce and fish were being traded; hand spun pottery was being sold; and the vibrant language of Arabic was being spoken. (Morocco is a major exporter of fruit and seafood.) The colors of Morocco were brilliant.



Then we stopped at a mosque called Hassan II and awed at the stark white building with intricate geometric designs. The drive then brought us to New Casablanca where we drove through expensive neighborhoods and saw the beautiful coastline.



We then made a stop to my favorite destination, an authentic rug shop. It was like a magic carpet ride. The walls were lined with rolled up, handmade carpets. On the walls hung actual carpets tacked up with nails. They were absolutely stunning. In true Moroccan tradition, the owner of the shop offered us tea and asked us to take off our shoes to feel the soft carpets beneath our toes. My mom and I ended up making a purchase comprised of 3 beautiful
30 rugs.





Across the street was a spice shop. My mom and I wondered in. The owner offered us spices to smell and shared with us the role these spices play in local home remedies. He convinced us that we needed Moroccan oil and face creams, so we made a few purchases.

Then, we were finally on our way to the airport. We thanked our taxi driver and then thanked the Lord when we landed at JFK airport, safely. It was a trip of a lifetime, one I will never forget.



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