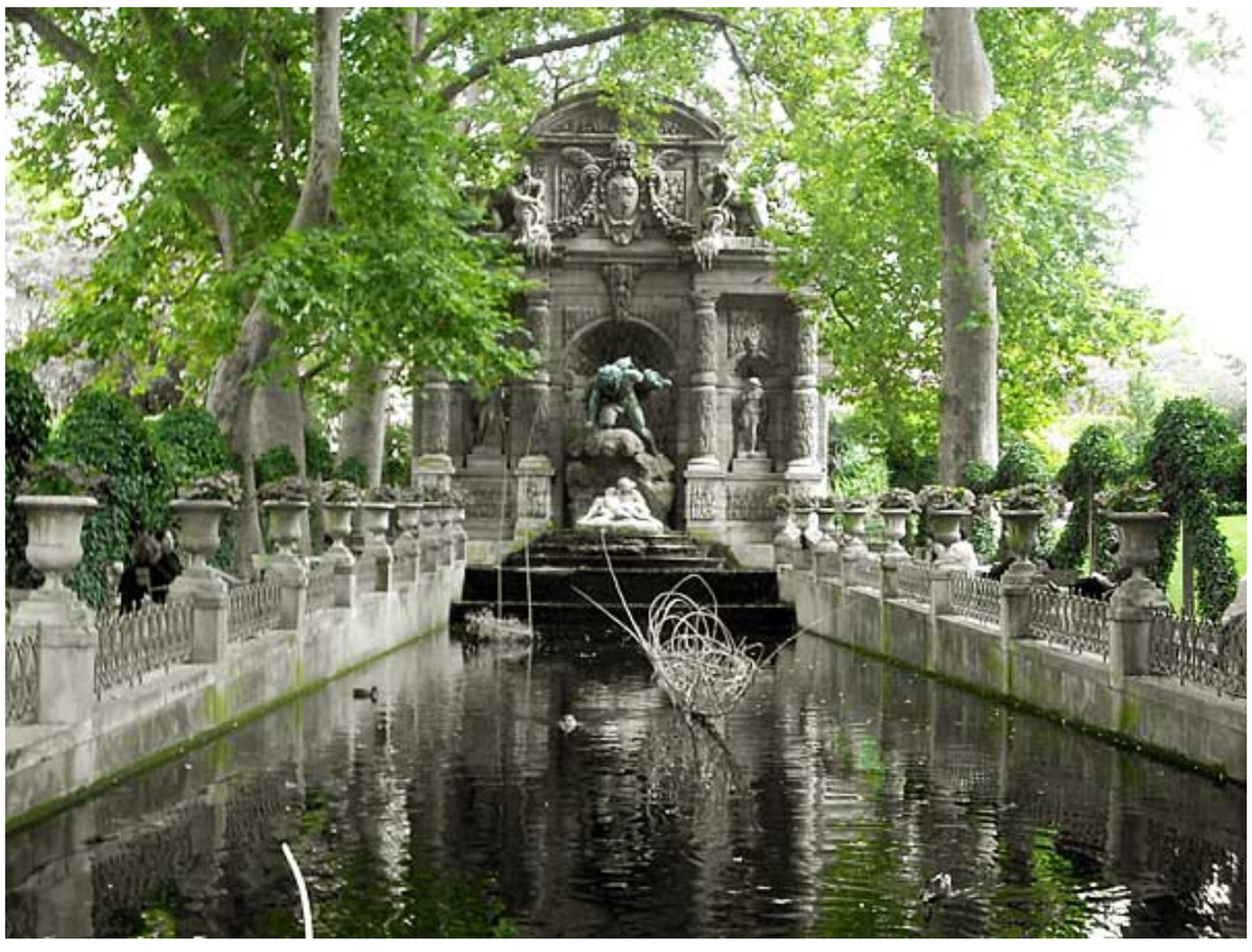
WEEKEND AWAY: PARIS

MAY 7, 2012



We have had so many great contributors tell us about their cities, and each of them has made me want to pack my bag and go explore the city, so I wanted to do a post about Paris. I still sometimes step out of my flat and get a little bit excited. Why? Because I do live in one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Sometimes I forget and then I look up and think: “Seriously... I am one lucky girl!”

So here is my list of what to do in Paris with your family for a weekend (or more!) in Paris:

SEE:

The Pompidou Centre - great for the whole family. The permanent collection is world-class and well laid out, not too big and not too small. The ground floor has a little exhibition center just for kids that normally runs parallel to the temporary exhibitions and helps kids understand the exhibition. If nothing else, taking the rolling staircases, which are on the outside of the building in the plastic tubes, is an activity in itself.

The Galerie de l'Evolution - Paris's natural history museum, which has recently been renovated and is worth a visit, especially if it is rainy outside. It is a beautiful space and is set in the Jardin des Plantes, the Botantical Gardens. It is a lovely to have a walk around in.

The Menagerie in the Jardin des Plantes - Also in the Jardin des Plantes is the Menagerie, a little zoo that has been around since the mid-19th century and has not changed a lot since then. It is a great size for smaller children and very charming.

The Sacrée Coeur and Montmartre - Montmartre and the Sacrée Coeur is a fun place to explore - unfortunately a lot of tourists agree with this, so the main streets are often packed with tourists. It is quite easy to avoid them though, as the groups normally stick to a few road and squares.

I recommend taking the funicular (easily my favourite public transportation vehicle) up to the top of the hill (you pay with a metro ticket). The view of Paris from the Sacrée Coeur is one of the best. If you walk back down the steps you will find a beautiful old merry-go-round - you might recognize it from the movie Amelie Poulain.

Musée D'Orsay - The Musée d'Orsay is a really accessible museum for kids from about 5 years and up. It houses a lot of the famous impressionists, so it is a great introduction to art and famous artwork that your kids might already know. It is right in the heart of Paris on the right bank of the Seine, beside the Louvre and the Tuileries Gardens

, the perfect place to go and have a run about in after a museum visit. Do note that one of the crazy things about parks in France is one is often not allowed on the grass and there are fierce looking officers with whistles paroling the parks to make sure it stays that way!

Cité des Enfants - The cité des Enfants is based in the Science Museum a little bit outside the centre of Paris at La Villette. It is definitely worth the treck out if you are staying for a few days. All the exhibitions are interactive, educational and fun. I have been there with my kids and it is quite interesting how different kids gravitate towards different part of the exhibition. The exhibitions are divided between a section for 2-7 year olds and a section for 5-12 year olds. I would advise booking tickets in advance from the museum's website.

PLAY:

Luxembourg Gardens - The Luxembourg Gardens is possibly my favourite park in Paris - it is beautiful and very, very Parisian. Again you will stumble over the problem that it is hard to find a piece of grass to sit on, but you can sit on the famous chairs, go on the merry-go-round, rent little boats to push around the little pond with a stick, visit the play area (you will notice all the French parents sitting on the benches outside the area while the foreign parents are running around the area trying to keep an eye on their children).

Jardin d'Acclimatisation - the Jardin d'Acclimatisation is situated in the bois de Bologne, on the west side of Paris. This is without a doubt my children's favourite park. It is a bit like a permanent fun fair with rollercoaster rides, a domestic animal zoo with some random lama's chucked in, little ponies to ride on, swings, a little water park and several play areas. There is a little train that goes from Porte Maillot to the Jardin which children love!

Parc Floral - on the other side of Paris in the east is the Parc Floral, situated in the bois the Vincennes. It has a great play area and also over the summer has a great climbing circuit through the trees from 6 years onwards. Children are put into harnesses and get to climb and swing through the forest. The Parc Floral also hosts open air concerts (mostly classic and jazz) during the summer months.

Parc de la Villette - If you have trekked out to the Cité des Enfants, don't miss the play area in the Parc de la Villette. It has some of the best play equipment I have seen, for all age groups.

EAT:

Petit Café du Monde - Though it is tucked away in a residental area in the 11th arrondissement, do stop by this café if you are in the area. It is especially good if you have small kids as there is a great play area and parents can relax with a good coffee and a piece of organic cake while kids play.

Pain Quotidien - The Pain Quotidien has branches all around the world, but I wanted to include this in my list as it has something 99% of French cafés have not: highchair and a changing table. The branch I go to is right in the middle of Paris in the Marais, and it is a good brunch/ lunch pit stop.

Salon de Thé Bonpoint - This tea room is in the basement of the beautiful flagship store of Bonpoint. It is a perfect place to stop for lunch after a morning of shopping around St Germain or after having had a run around the Luxembourg Gardens which are only a few minutes walk.

Rose Bakery - Courtney introduced me to Rose Bakery as I was refusing to go to an English bistro in Paris. She insisted and I now

love this place. It is especially good for breakfast, if you are not a huge fan of the croissant and pain au chocolat's on offer in French cafés. There are several branches of Rose Bakery in Paris..

Marché des Enfants Rouges - The Marché des enfants rouges is situated in the north part of the Marais and is such a fun places for kids as you order your food from the different stalls and sit down along long table and benches to eat your food. There is a great Japanese stand, but you can also choose between crepes and creole food to name a few.

Café de l'Industrie - This is as classic a French hip café as they come. I like it because they like kids in this place. No special extras are offered to them but no one minds if things get spilt of if a table is a bit noisy. There is a very reasonable kids menu if you ask if it.

SHOP:

Bon Marché - I am not a big fan of department stores, but if you are looking for a place that has everything under one roof, the Bon Marché is the place to go. It is not as crowded as the Galerie Lafayette on the other side of the Seine, and the toy department is fabulous, as it the children's clothes department (and the shoe department, and the handbag department...)

Marie Puce is a lovely little boutique in the heart of the 6th arrondissement. Beautifully designed French clothes, mostly made in France. Classic with a interesting twist. Definitely worth having a look at. (If you don't happen to be coming to Paris in the near future you can also shop on their website.

Serendipity is just down the road from Marie Puce, it is made the most famous interior design shop for children in Paris. It mixes it's own designs together with carefully chosen pieces. You will find everything her from beds to room accessories.

Bonpoint - The flagship store of this label is well worth a visit, there are rooms after rooms of beautiful children's clothes, housed in a beautiful house, just off the Luxembourg Gardens.

Bonton - Bonton used to be under the Bonpoint umbrella but is now flying on it's own. The recently opened flagship store on the boulevard Filles de Calvaire in the 3rd is great, there is a hairdresser, the lovely Bonton clothes, an interior deco department, a great little book department, accessories for birthday parties

Wowo - Wowo is a tiny children's clothes boutique just across the street from Bonton on the rue Froissart with sweet, quirky designs. They have a great collection of baby, boys and girls clothes. I also love their fabric which they sell in store by the meter.

Petit French Trotters - French Trotters has been around for year and has a great collection of women's clothes. Pretty much next door, Petit French Trotters has opened with an equally great collections of children's clothes.

Alice à Paris - Alice à Paris has managed a rare feat: stylish French clothes at very reasonable prices, I stop in one of the boutiques a couple of times a year to stock up. There are several boutiques around Paris.

Talc - Another great French label and a big favourite with the mom's out here. The boutique is in the 6th in the rue Jacob. The designs are simple but comfy and fun. The clothes are often recognisable by the cute animal ears sewn on top of the hoods.

Soeur - this one is an interesting one as this shop designs for the teenage market from about 10 years up (though both Esther and I have found some pretty nice pieces for ourselves there). The Soeur style does represent the style a lot of teenage girls in Paris dress - relaxed but with style. The boutique is the the rue Bonaparte also in the 6th.

SLEEP:

Georges V - This is THE address if you are staying in Paris grand style. Products based on the age of the style will be supplied, each child receives a present on it's arrival, a children's hairdresser can be ordered to come to the room and games and toys can be borrowed from reception. The Georges V comes with a prices but I am sure the service is impeccable

I-Escape is one of my favourite website to find hotels on and their list of Paris family-friendly hotels is really good

VRBO is a great way to find a holiday flat without using an agency. A few friends of mine have used VRBO to find a short term rental in Paris and have always been really happy with the flats they have found. Staying in a flat if you are travelling with kids does have advantages, as being able to cook meals at home after a long day of sightseeing can be a life saver!

Category: Destinations,Travel,Weekend Getaways

EMILIE IN PARIS | 14 COMMENTS