



Dining with Legends in Paris

Following in the steps of the rich and famous holds a certain attraction. It's something about disturbing the air that once encircled them, and what better place than Paris to retrace those fabled steps!

The era of Hemingway, Nin, Fitzgerald, Stein, ad infinitum, bequeathed a host of creative drinking and dining basins. Granted, other renowned philosophers, musicians and artistic rebels preceded them by a century or two. The Montparnasse area lured the famous and infamous at la Couple, le Select, la Rotonde and le Dome. Even Lenin and Trotsky deliberated with intellectuals in boulevard cafes where wandering expats perfected the art of turning a phrase and tipping a glass. "The Lost Generation" drew upon the Muses of Paris. It's not difficult to imagine young Hemingway carefully crafting "A Moveable Feast" in the quiet of day at La Closerie des Lilas. Did he steal away to a corner in the paneled bar or sit, just there, at a little marble-topped table by the window?

In a pageant as old as the City of Light, the bistros and brasseries of Paris continue to play host to native and visitor, artist and observer. You'll find the grande to the intime, the neo-chic to the quaint little café on the side street. Their sweeping cuisine satisfies the most demanding palate, and you will easily find guides and websites filled with inviting recommendations for dining throughout the city.

We enjoyed endless and distinctly different dining experiences -- with friends at the lively Brasserie Julien with its historic 1880's Art Deco ambiance, on our own a café au lait and croissant under the canopy of a restful sidewalk café. Once, we slipped down the stairs to a petite underground cabaret in the Latin Quarter for a night of spectacular fun and music. Every experience was a wonderful mix of history, taste and local color. Our advice? Save money on other things, if you must, but allow often for the legendary pleasure of eating out in Paris.



So how do you choose among the 5,000 restaurants of Paris? A friend advised us well, as we prepared for our first Parisian trip. "A café will 'call your name.' Go there frequently. It will become your home, your window to the world." We learned something equally important. When shopping, buy it – then and there. You probably won't go back, and regret will dog you ever after. But, when it comes to cafes or restaurants or brasseries, go a little further. The one that 'calls your name' is just around that next corner.

Hemingway's sentiments are suitable for any age, any gender: *"If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast."*