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MODEL CAROLINE DE MAIGRET AND KATI NESCHER AT PARIS FASHION WEEK FEBRUARY 2015

How to live like a Parisian

How do they do it? Our insider's tips to help you exude effortless Parisian elegance...



by Rowena Carr-Allinson

When it comes to lifestyle, Paris is synonymous with the tangible virtues of knowledge, elegance and attitude. Parisians have been bringing their own brand of glamour to the fashion world for centuries, but how do they achieve the impossible: looking **and** living elegantly? After many years of observation and education, we think we know their secrets:

Be discreet

Parisians are discreet. About all sorts of things. But that's another story... Keep the voice volume down, and aim for discretion all around. The idea is to blend in. Need a map? Use an app on your phone and, look like every other Parisian, checking their phone. Don't fold out a giant map, the best way to be spotted as an intruder! Have direction. Parisians are forever striding somewhere, so wandering aimlessly is another dead giveaway...

Go dark



CLEMENCE POESY FOR PABLO BY GERARD DAREL © GERARD DAREL

Parisians simply don't do bright colours. Dark shades like navy, black and grey, are the locals' regular uniform and are always de rigueur in the French capital. Throughout Spring and Summer, neutrals are tolerated and some will carry off beige, whites and sands with a certain aplomb but you'll be hard pushed to find Parisians wearing rainbow brights, and even less likely to find wild 'cheerful' patterns - whatever the trends dictate. The only pattern that works eternally is the classic stripe, at a push a polka dot or a discreet star for the little ones.

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Avoid tourist spots



TOURIST FREE ZONE: LES BATIGNOLLES © BATIGNOLLES

Of course as a visitor you'll want to tick off the sights, but the reality is that the locals tend to avoid the tourist-ridden areas like the plague. Venture into the local 'residential' quarters like the 7th, beyond the Eiffel Tower for a stroll in the market on the Rue Cler or to the trendy shopping district of the Marais around Place des Vosges. Another great place to 'fit in' is the so called 'bobo' (bourgeois bohemian) areas like the 17th around Batignolles and the Canal St Martin where Parisians like to spend their downtime lingering over coffees, brunches and **aperos**.

Related: [Batignolles, Paris: a guide](#)

Try out le bed hair



VANESSA PARADIS FOR HERMÈ © HERMÈS COLLECTION

Yes, Parisian ladies do spend an inordinate amount of time at the hairdressers. In fact, there seem to be as many hairdressers in France as there are Pharmacies, and that speaks volumes. However, the local ladies tend to go for a very casual hair do, somewhere between the 'I just fell out of bed' hair and the tousled 'I-lost-my-brush' look, generally trying to achieve a 'I really couldn't care less' vibe. This laid back attitude to hair styling is championed by great French icons like Caroline de Maigret and Lou Doillon who ooze natural and clearly believe in less is more. Makeup is also minimal; the key is to sport a natural look, even if it isn't.

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Drink the right coffee



CAFÉ IN BATIGNOLLES PARIS © MARC OLIVER NE BLANC

If Romans look down their noses at those who order a cappuccino past midday, Parisians also have their own coffee codes. Order an espresso (short, dark and very strong) at any time of day - this is the basic '**café**'. For the same with a dash of milk, order a '**noisette**', or for a larger milky coffee the magic word is '**un grand crème**'. Also worth ordering, to finish a meal, if you run out of space for desert but still have a sweet tooth, is the '**café gourmand**' ie an espresso with a selection of 'mini deserts', generally a [taste of the restaurant's](#) favourites, which can range from teeny tiny strawberry **tartes** to chocolate mousses or macaroons. **Delicieux**.

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