

SHOPPING FOR BEST BUYS AND BARGAINS IN PARIS

By Jeanne Feldman
an American in Paris



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Disclaimer:

Dear Readers, I can absolutely guarantee that I have visited and checked out each store listed in this E-Book. What I cannot guarantee is that there will be no changes afterwards. Even in Paris, which is very stable, there are changes.

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INTRODUCTION

When I arrived in Paris in 1991, I asked myself, "Don't French people know about factory outlet stores, markdowns and good deals?" Paris is a really expensive city, and I had to survive on a strict budget. Over the years I found out – of course they do! But you've got to know where to go. As a matter of fact, in the suburbs, it's very similar to the U.S. with hyper discount stores and even factory outlet shopping centers. But inside Paris, you've got to constantly be on the lookout, putting all the little pieces together. It also helps to have French friends willing to share their shopping tips!

At the same time, I also discovered how to act in the stores so that I would get good service. "Pas evident" (not obvious) to us Americans used to automatic friendliness. When you're shopping in a foreign country, you're really on the front lines culturally, so to speak. And I'm not talking museums and the ballet. What I'm talking about is how normal people behave and the unwritten codes they follow.

Eventually I wrote my own shopping guide, *Best Buys and Bargains in Paris* for those of you who don't read French, but want to know where to go for the best deals.

This is how it happened. I was working for an American who had his own business in Paris. He went back to the States to get married, and then he and his new wife came back to Paris. She was a true American bargain hunter, so I wanted to give her a shopping guide for Paris. But when I looked for a discount shopping guide for Paris, I found that the only good ones were in French, which she didn't read. And all the English guides emphasized luxury shopping, very chic, but real expensive. That inspired me to write my shopping guide in English, showing not only where the French go to shop but also how to act in the stores.

I'd like to interject here what I mean by "bargain". Cheap goods sold at low prices are not a bargain as far as I'm concerned. A bargain is when you purchase an object that you really like or want, at the highest quality, for less than the going rate. That's it. I sometimes ask myself why there are so many of us who are addicted to bargains (bargainoholics?). But isn't it true that when you find a good deal, you remember all the details about where you got it and even the price most of the time. Why? Because it's a win. After all the hard knocks that life can throw at us, here is an occasion where we have succeeded. And, we've got the evidence to prove it! ("Oh yes, this is the blouse that I got on sale in the factory outlet store... I wear it a lot and it only cost...")

This is the true spirit of "bargain" shopping.

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SHOPPING TOURS

Best buy shopping consists of knowing the right stores and then how to act once you're in them. While researching my shopping guide, I wandered all over Paris for about six months, visiting stores. Since then, I've developed another business doing intercultural management training for French executives who work internationally.

I still wander around Paris because I love to see so many layers of history, from antiquity to the present. And I still find incredible stores hidden away in each neighborhood. Certain individuals find a hole in the wall (sometimes literally) and open up "their" store, or personal space. How could I share these "finds" with others? The idea finally came to me: shopping tours. I have created guided tours into non-touristy Parisian neighborhoods to show off some of these fabulous stores plus the neighborhood itself. I also share with you about shopping strategy and shopping etiquette, and can act as your guide and interpreter in the stores.

For more information on my tours, visit my website page:

<http://www.jeanne-feldman.com/shoppingtours.htm>

Join me as we discover Paris in a different way - not through monuments from the misty past, but from people's enterprise of today. Get a real sense of what it's like to live in Paris right now.

SHOPPING ETIQUETTE

French culture tends to be formal and is definitely based on personal relationships. Before you establish these relationships, French people can seem to be cold and arrogant. Afterwards, they will be the soul of hospitality and do all sorts of favors. It's the beginning that makes all the difference. This means that when you first enter any store or department of a large store, scan the area to find the sales person, lock eyes with her or him and say, "bonjour," (hello). That's it. I know this may sound really simplistic and unimportant, but, trust me, it will entirely change the sales person's attitude towards you. They may not be super friendly, but they will not be rude. They will be helpful. They will leave you alone if you're just looking ("je regarde"). You have demonstrated that you are "bien élevé" (well brought up with good manners and therefore worthy of being served).

Then, when you leave the store or department, say "au revoir" (good-bye)! I finally "got" this when I was shopping with a French girlfriend. We were going in and out of a series

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of shops. As were leaving each store, I noticed that even if we hadn't bought anything at all--she said "au revoir." Finally it clicked.

I had discovered French "shopping etiquette". Kind of like a mini-relationship. Now I know why, just after I'd arrived in France, when I was leaving stores without saying goodbye, just as I was at the door, the sales person would call out, in a kind of cynical voice, "au revoir!" ("another 'sauvage' American who is rudely leaving our store without even having the courtesy to say goodbye"). Although it seemed a bit artificial at first, now when I visit the States, if I don't say goodbye, something is missing! I'm sure this mystifies the American sales people to no end as they wonder, "What on earth is she saying goodbye for?"

FRENCH ZEN SHOPPING ATTITUDE

If you have a specific item in mind, choose a backup store! I'm not sure why, but Parisian stores, whatever their size, tend to run out of stock on a regular basis. Or, you arrive and they are on vacation, or simply "out to lunch" (officially or non-officially). Or they're taking inventory (this can apply to stores as large as Monoprix). I repeat: **if you are short on time, choose a backup store where you can go to buy your item.** I call this the "French-Zen" shopping attitude: "If they have it, great. If not, I'll wait and check back (assuming I have the time), or I'll buy it somewhere else. Or I'll buy something similar. Or -- I'll do without!" Voilà, the ultimate training ground for detachment from the world of objects -- Paris.

FINAL THOUGHTS

If you plan on visiting Paris for a long or short time, and want to shop seriously or just pick up a few things, remember that best buys and bargains do exist, especially outside the tourist areas. And, remember your shopping etiquette! Start saying "bonjour" when you enter and "au revoir" when you leave any store, and you will be amazed at the difference this makes in how you are treated. Small merchants/artisans are usually not in it for the money. They are "in it" because they are passionate about what they do. Therefore, it is up to you to show interest and then to pass the various "tests" they will no doubt throw your way. After that, and only after that, will they bend over backwards to treat you well. For instance, at my local pharmacy, where I had gone consistently for over a year, one day I did not have exact change for a purchase, nor did they. Their response?

"Just pay us what you owe us the next time you come in."

"Oh!"

It really is like night and day.

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1: SHOPPING STRATEGY

Officially, Paris is not the most expensive city in the world -- but it sure can seem like it! Here is some advice about "shopping strategy" to combine with "shopping etiquette" to find those "best buys" and the best service.

STORE CARDS AND TAX REFUND

In the department stores Printemps and Galeries Lafayette, as a non-European citizen, you are entitled to a 10% store discount card (which is good for an additional 10% off during sales, by the way). There are three separate stores grouped together on Boulevard Haussmann: Lafayette Maison, Lafayette Homme and Lafayette Coupole. You can get the discount card at the Welcome ("Accueil") Desk just inside the Rue Mogador entrance in the Lafayette Coupole store.

To get the tax refund (le détaxe), you must spend over 175€ in one day in one store. Department stores offer a refund of 12%, while small stores will offer you a tax refund of between 13 and 15%. So, here's my strategy advice: if you have many different types of items to buy that will add up to the minimum amount, go to a department store; for a purchase of one kind of thing that will add up to the minimum amount, shop in a smaller store to get the larger tax refund.

If you're in Paris for an extended stay, I recommend that you ask for a "carte de fidélité" or store card, in stores where you plan to shop on a regular basis. One example is the perfume and cosmetics chain Marionnaud Parfumeries where the "carte" has a chip that is scanned at each purchase. After accumulating purchases equal to 152 Euros, you automatically receive a "Chèque-fidélité" in the mail equal to 7.50 Euros that you can apply towards your next purchase. If, however, you're in Paris for a brief stay, I recommend a different shopping strategy. Shop for the same products in the perfume and cosmetics chain Sephora where after spending the same amount (175€), you receive a tax refund of 15% rather than the 13% you would receive from Marionnaud.

PARIS SALES

Another way to use "shopping strategy" is to take advantage of the bi-annual sales in France. You may not know it, but these sales are regulated by the French government. This means that the goods on sale have to be regular store merchandise, not merchandise brought in just for the sale. They have to have been in the store, removed and put into storage and then brought back. The original sales tag should still be

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attached and the sales price clearly marked. Sometimes a line is drawn through the original price, and the new price is marked on the tag, or the original tag is left on and the sales price is indicated on a sign for a small section of merchandise. These are the rules. Although not all stores abide by these rules, the department stores and the big chain stores do.

You can also take advantage of the sales to visit great stores that are, frankly, overpriced most of the time. These stores include Jacqueline Riu and 123 Un Deux Trois, both chain stores that can be found in any major shopping center. This is also the best time to shop at Paris department stores which are pretty expensive otherwise. Or you may want to visit young designer stores like Agnès B, 6 rue du Jour, 1st arrondissement, Metro Les Halles.

Because of the "rules", you can sometimes find really good buys. The "price" you pay is bumping into hundreds of French shoppers who are also taking advantage of "les soldes"!

The addresses for the "mother" department stores are: **Printemps** 64 boulevard Haussmann, 9th arrondissement, Metro Havre Caumartin; **Galeries Lafayette**, 40 boulevard Haussmann, 9th arrondissement, Metro Chaussée d'Antin; **La Samaritaine**, 19 rue de la Monnaie, 1st arrondissement, Metro Châtelet; **BHV**, 52-64 rue de Rivoli, 4th arrondissement, Metro Hotel de Ville; **Le Bon Marché**, 22 rue de Sèvres, 7th arrondissement, Metro Sèvres Babylone;.

A weblink to check the bi-annual sale dates is: <http://www.finances.gouv.fr/DGCCRF/>
Connect to this site from the end of December for the upcoming winter sales (January/February) and from mid-June for the summer sales (June/July).

DESIGNER DISCOUNT AND RESALE

If you can't schedule your trip to Paris during the bi-annual sales periods in January/February and June/July, but you're still yearning for French designer fashion at reduced prices, take advantage of "designer discount" stores. These outlets sell overbuys and unsold stock from last season's designer collections (fins de série) all year round. You can also shop in chic resale clothing stores for last year's collections, often little worn or not worn at all. One store that fits both categories is Annexe des Créateurs, 19 rue Godot de Mauroy, Metro Madeleine. Annexe has always sold women's designer fashions at a discount, but they have now added resale items (dépôt-vente) in one of the two small stores, sitting side by side. While not low, the prices are, indeed, much lower than the original prices and lower than in other resale shops selling similar merchandise.

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There is a complete list of designer discount and resale shops in my shopping guide, *Best Buys and Bargains in Paris*. And we visit Annexe des Créateurs on the Best Buy Madeleine Shopping Tour.

<http://www.jeanne-feldman.com/>

2: GIFTS

Although Paris is an expensive city, you can find lovely yet inexpensive gifts that are truly "French". In fact, the choice is big when you know where to look and what to look for. By inexpensive, I mean gifts within a price range of 5 to 15 euros. I also know that gifts must be packed into a suitcase and brought back home intact!

What is more French than gourmet food? So, why not start your gift search in the gourmet supermarkets of Paris, one of the best being La Grande Epicerie de Paris at 38 rue de Sèvres, just next to the department store Le Bon Marché (Metro Sèvres-Babylone). Just inside the entrance, is the fresh pastry counter. Straight back past the pastries, you'll find a great variety of pre-packaged chocolate. Further back in the store is another counter with "designer" chocolate sold by weight. There are also pre-packaged exotic tea blends made by Marriage Frères, a *salon de thé* that Parisians know and love. You can also find other brands of delicious herbal tea blends, plus tins of French cookies, candy and biscuits. While there, you can also enjoy the abundant food displays, which are splendid. (I'm told that on Saturdays they give out free food samples all over the store!) The market is open Monday through Saturday, 8:30 am to 9 pm.

What about giving chocolate as a gift? There are small *artisanal* or "home-made" chocolate stores all over Paris. One I really like is about as centrally located as you could wish. It's called Charles Chocolatier, 15 rue Montorgeuil (Metro/RER Les Halles), and it has been a family owned business since 1910. I really like Charles Chocolatier because they make *chocolat à l'ancienne*. This means pure dark chocolate made from cocoa, 100% cocoa butter and flavorings. No animal fat (milk, butter and cream) is added. Yum!

Other unusual "French" gifts can be found in La Maison du Miel, 24 rue Vignon (Metro Madeleine or Havre Caumartin). As the name suggests, this store specializes in honey and honey derivatives. Although a jar of honey may not be the ideal gift to transport in your suitcase, they also sell honey nougat, candy and a special cake called *pain d'épice* that is the French equivalent of gingerbread. They also have honey-based beauty and health products.

Another inexpensive gift is perfumed soap which can be found in just about any **parapharmacie* in Paris. It comes in a variety of scents and makes a very attractive gift. As the name suggests, a parapharmacie is an offshoot of a pharmacy, but it focuses on skin and haircare products with a few vitamins/minerals and herbal teas thrown in for good measure.

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A great place to shop for gifts in a charming pedestrian shopping street, very "in" among trendy young French, called **Bercy Village** (Metro Cour Saint Emilion on the line 14). It was created on the site of wine warehouses that had been built along the Seine River in the 19th century. You can still see the rails, buried in the cobblestone street, that were used to transport the wine to the warehouses. Take the Passage Saint Emilion straight back from the Metro exit. One of my favorite stores there is La Cure Gourmande, a cookie and candy store based on traditional recipes from the South of France. Not only are the cookies and candies delicious, but the boxes and tins are works of art in themselves. For more information about Bercy Village, see Chapter 7: The Perfect Shopping Trip (Sunday).

Finally, for that true French touch, why not buy a gift that was hand-made in a French monastery? The one and only store for this is called Artisanat Monastique, 68 bis avenue Denfert-Rochereau, Metro Denfert-Rochereau or RER Port Royal (be aware that 68 bis is a distinct and different address from 68). The store itself is situated in a Parisian monastery called *Monastère de la Visitation*, (yes, they do exist--especially in this neighborhood). It's open Monday through Friday noon to 6:30 pm and Saturday 2 to 7 pm. The atmosphere is calm and harmonious, partially due to the fact that all the nice ladies who wait on you are volunteers and the goal of the store is to support a network of over 300 monasteries in France. All the items are handicrafts made by monks and nuns and the quality reflects that. The store carries gifts in many different categories, starting (after all this is France) with food gifts right next to the entrance. They also sell liquors, plus hand made body care products, each item with the name of the monastery on the label. In the basement are the crafts with a great selection of lace trimmed nightgowns and linen kapkins. There are also pillows and 100% wool woven shawls. It seems that in the past, when young women entered a convent, they took their trousseau with them, but were not permitted to use it, of course. After the nun's death, her family often gave permission to sell the antique clothing and linen to support the convent -- even lace trimmed bloomers which, I was told, are now being transformed into blouses by the young and *branché* ("in"). It's a really special place and worth going out of your way to visit.

As you can see, Paris has an abundance of gifts at reasonable prices. But, the good stuff is often hidden from immediate view. Once you discover the secrets, you realize that you have discovered something very special -- a way of doing things closely connected with the past, but confidently facing the future. France --*vive la différence!*

Three Unique Gift Stores in Paris

There are three exceptional gift stores, all within walking distance of each other in the 18th arrondissement, between the Métro Abbesses and Anvers. The neighborhood is artsy, but "downscale" enough so that you can still find some bargains and best buys.

Belle de Jour at 7 rue Tardieu, has a wonderful collection of contemporary and antique perfume bottles and glassware. Once, during my visit, a French woman was at the counter putting her collection of antique glassware on consignment in the store. When you look for the store, go to the middle of the building since there is another store in the same building using the same number (which is fairly common in Paris). They're open Monday to Saturday, 10:30 to 1 and 2 to 7.

If you like angels, you'll love the small intimate gift shop, La Boutique des Anges, at 2 rue Yvonne Le Tac,. There are angels on everything from picture frames to lamp shades, jewelry and cards. Plus scads of angel figurines, of course. You can really fulfill your fantasies from the silly to the serious (there are a few replicas of sculptures as well). The prices ranged from low to moderate, so this is a great store to pick up a unique gift or two. It's open Monday to Saturday, 10:30 to 6:30 and Sunday 1:30 to 6.

At 6 rue des Trois-Frères is Dentelles et Ribambelles, a tiny store that specializes in beautiful porcelain dolls and doll houses. They also have a splendid selection of doll house accessories, plus other toys such as stuffed animals. This store is open Monday to Saturday, 11 to 7:30 and Sunday from 11 to 6:30.

If you'd like to visit more stores in this creative and artistic area of Paris, check out my shopping tour of Montmartre!

<http://www.jeanne-feldman.com/shoppingtours.htm>

3: BEAUTY AND HEALTH SECRETS

France is really great for creams, gels, lotions and ointments that you smear on your face and body. I am not talking about name brand beauty products that cost a lot of money. I am talking about products that you can purchase in any pharmacie and/or parapharmacie in Paris. These products will not only take make you look better, but they can heal as well.

When I first moved to Paris, I simply couldn't find the inexpensive yet high quality body lotions and liquid soaps that I had easily found in the States, usually in health food stores. Fortunately, I had a doctor who prescribed a body lotion and liquid soap for my sensitive skin and suggested I look for it in a parapharmacie. Voila (i.e. bingo!), All to be found at very reasonable prices in any parapharmacie.

These stores have become more and more popular during the past five years, and, now they're scattered all over Paris.

You can also check out the local parapharmacie for great, yet inexpensive gifts, especially for women. You'll see unusual brands but it's great, because they're really French! The last time I was in my local parapharmacie, I saw a ton of body creams, lotions and oils. There were also all kinds of emulsions, foaming cleansers, masques and serums (special facial care products that are liquid rather than oily so that they can penetrate deep into the skin). Many used natural plant-based scents.

Besides all that, parapharacies are a great source for dental care products such as toothbrushes and dental floss, not easily found elsewhere.

Take Biafine for example. This "emulsion" or cream was officially created to heal first and second degree burns in addition to the skin rashes caused by radiation treatment. I use Biafine every day as a hand cream. I also use it, of course, to heal sunburn. Biafine is light and non-greasy and can be found in any pharmacie. It is produced by Laboratoire Médix.

A friend of mine told me about Cicamosa, another "emulsion", or cream, that contains an extract of mimosa plants. The "cica" comes from "cicatriser" meaning to heal skin, derived from "cicatrice" or scar. As you may imagine, Cicamosa was created to reduce scar tissue as your skin heals and can be used on a deep scratch or cut, after disinfecting it, of course. I personally use it every time after I swim to heal the ugly red lines that have formed around my eyes from my swim goggles pressing into my face. It

made by Lutia Laboratoires, a division of Boots Healthcare. Cicamosa can be found in parapharmacies.

Next comes Arnigel, formulated to treat bruises and muscle fatigue. It contains extracts of the herb arnica and is also produced by the homeopathic Laboratoires Boiron. I like the fact it's a gel since it is greaseless and, therefore, quickly absorbed into the skin. I can attest to its effectiveness since I have a bad back and have used it successfully to reduce the pain in sore back muscles. Arnigel is only to be used on unbroken skin.

But the winner is: Homéoplasmine. Basically, this "pommade" or ointment consists of vaseline plus an extract of the herb calendula. I have always called it the "magic ointment" because when I apply Homéoplasmine to a surface cut or abrasion, it literally heals in half the time. I was confirmed in my faith when I found out that a French woman I worked with actually called it by the same name! Just try putting a blob of ointment on a wound right after disinfecting it and before putting on a bandage. The vaseline protects and the herb heals. I always keep a tube on hand for scrapes and cuts. Homéoplasmine is produced by Laboratoires Boiron which makes and distributes many homeopathic products.

I also use Topicrem, a face and body lotion recommended by my French dermatologist. Topicrem is a light, highly penetrating moisturizing lotion that is great to use just after a bath or shower. It's also non-greasy and hypoallergenic and can be found in any parapharmacie. The manufacturer is Laboratoires Charlieu.

Although there is a liquid cleanser that goes with Topicrem, I have found something I like even better, from another French doctor. It's called Atoderm Moussant and is a liquid non-soap cleanser specially formulated to protect dry and delicate skin (*moussant* means "foaming"). It's very mild. On the bottle, it says (in French and English) "ultra-rich foaming gel." The trick is to rub your hands together to "foam it up" before using it. It is made by Bioderm Laboratoire Dermatologique.

So, next time you're in Paris, treat yourself to some beauty and health products that are effective and reasonably priced at the same time.

Product	Use	Found
Biafine	hands & face, sunburn	pharmacie
Cicamosa	healing wounds	parapharmacie
Homéoplasmine	healing cuts & abrasions	pharmacie
Topicrem	face & body	parapharmacie
Atoderm Moussant	liquid non-soap cleanser	parapharmacie
Arnigel	bruises, contusions, muscle fatigue	pharmacie

Plantaderm

When I arrived in Paris, I continued using a skin care oil from the United States rather than find a replacement in France. Unfortunately, during the return trip from a vacation in Turkey, the bottle cap came loose and all the oil leaked out. I was devastated since it would take quite a while to re-order (from California). The girlfriend I had traveled with made the comment, "But Jeanne, here you are living in one of the most stylish and beauty conscious cities in the world. Surely you can find great skin care products right here in Paris!" Good point. Easy but expensive came first. I quickly found some creams and lotions at a swank skin care salon. Later, while doing research for my shopping guide, *Best Buys and Bargains in Paris*, I discovered Plantaderm.

Plantaderm is off the beaten track, so you have to know it's there. It's worth it. Once you've found it, just walk into this secret, "in the know," space. While I was researching Best Buy Shopping Tours, I managed to interview the owner, an ex-pharmacist, who had noticed that many beauty products had formulas which didn't contain much of anything. Determined to do better, he took some classes and proceeded to whip up his own formulas in the kitchen sink (or something to that effect). They sold so well in his pharmacy that he went into the beauty formula business -- selling to name brands such as Christian Dior. The Plantaderm store is truly an outlet store, with very low prices, and I have been extremely happy with the skin care products. All the ingredients are natural, from vegetable or marine sources.

For example, one product I really like is the *baume au polyvitaminé*, terrific for cuticles. I got the idea from a time I was in the store, and a woman marched back through the door just to buy a tube of *baume polyvitaminé*. She had sampled the *baume* on her nails and then left the store. It was while walking down the street that she noticed the effect (both *baumes* kind of melt into your cuticles). She was so impressed that she walked right back into the store to buy a tube.

Another great product is the nail hardener, sold in the store for about 3€. I actually checked out the designer brand (which I promised never to reveal) that has bought the formula, and found that the price in the department store, for the same thing, was 15€. Now that's what I call a bargain! And I swear (scout's honor) that the *Biosérum aux liposomes (contour des yeux)* eliminates wrinkles under your eyes. I don't know about you, but in the morning I wake up with bags and wrinkles that, during wee hours, have sprouted like plant roots. I apply the biosérum and away they go. Finished. Poof. No kidding.

The skin care system at Plantaderm starts with cleansing your face using a "lait." Theirs is really nice because it not only effectively removes make up, including mascara, but

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also rinses off with water. (To simply wash your face, you can also use a non-soap cleanser/shower gel such as Atoderm Moussant found in any parapharmacie.) You then wipe your face with a "lotion" applied on a cotton pad, apply a biosérum around your eyes and another over your entire face. Finish off with a "crème" to seal it all in. And *voilà*. All these products are tops at Plantaderm – and you can't beat the price!

Plantaderm

8 rue de Prague, 12th arrondissement

Metro: Ledru-Rollin

Open Tuesday to Saturday, noon to 6:30 (closed in August)

4: RESALE SHOPPING

CLOTHING

The Sweater (I "bin" shoppin')

The damp and cold of late autumn in Paris had set in, and I needed a wool sweater. A friend and I decided to meet the challenge of finding sweaters for less in Paris. Actually, I mean cheap, since we are both on a very restricted budget. All the research I did for my shopping guide, *Best Buys and Bargains in Paris* and my shopping tours makes me an expert on best buy shopping, right?

The first shop that came to mind was the ultimate bargain used-clothing store, Guerrisol. Let me be very clear - Guerrisol is not for sissies. Rock bottom prices mean rock bottom service. What they do is buy used clothing collected from all over Europe from non-profit associations and then resell it in their stores. We decided to take our chance. Yes, indeed, you can't beat the prices: 1€ for a 100% wool sweater.

A Guerrisol store is full of bins. Near the front entrance are the super cheap bins (1 € per item), to entice you in. Toward the back are the more expensive bins (5 € per item-woah!). We sifted through the bins, and I actually found a white sweater, 70% wool, that wasn't at all bad, in the 1 € bin near the front door. Given that the only mirror in the store was broken and there are no changing booths, I held it up to my front and checked with my friend, "I think it will fit." I repeat, Guerrisol is not for sissies.

After I picked up my sweater in the 1€ bin near the entrance, I carried it around with me as I looked at the 3€ bins toward the back of the shop. When I got ready to pay, I placed my 1€ on the counter. Of course, the man behind the cash register demanded 3 €. Bien sûr, I wasn't going to pay 3€ for a 1€ item. Since there was no way to prove anything, as no item is marked with a price (just the bins), I stood my ground and paid my euro. Singular.

We then decided to check out the high side of resale shopping. Also while researching my shopping guide, I had discovered a resale store in the 16th arrondissement, the "Upper East Side" of Paris you might say. It's part of a church complex and includes a large resale store for clothing (men, women and children), jewelry, household items, books, toys, household linen, etc. The store is called "*Fondation d'Auteuil*" and it's one of those special places. The secret is that it's located in one of the most upscale neighborhoods in Paris where the wealthy can donate to a good cause. The quality of

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the clothing is exceptional and while not as cheap as Guerrisol, it comes close. (Certainly, the prices are better than in the designer consignment stores or *dépôt ventes* that recycle upper crust clothing, although we visit one of the best ones on a shopping tour and I have a list of the best ones in my shopping guide, bien sûr.) That afternoon at Fondation, I spotted blouses for less than 5€, pants for less than 4€, plus excellent values for sweaters, suits and jackets. In fact, about two years ago I bought an *Yves Saint Laurent rive gauche* dress there for 100 FF (about 15€). Ok, so it had one or two small holes in the sleeves. Who cares? The dress is so gorgeous that no one notices the (now mended) holes!

That day, sadly, neither my friend nor I saw any clothes that we wanted, but my friend did find and buy great household items. Fondation, like Guerrisol, is the kind of place where it's best to check in regularly, just to see what they have. We parted from each other late that afternoon happy campers, my friend with her household items and me with my 70% wool sweater. Of course, the first thing I did when I returned home was to drop said sweater into my washing machine. (No way am I going to wear anything from Guerrisol that has not been washed.) I threw the sweater and a bunch of other odds and ends into the washing machine and set the temp at 30° Centigrade (86 ° Fahrenheit). This is the beginning of a tragic series of events as you will see.

I looked at my watch and since it read 5:30 pm, I relaxed. I had plenty of time to do the wash and then leave at about 7:00 pm for a private art opening. A friend of mine was exhibiting for the first time, and I really wanted to see her paintings. I then looked at my clock. What? It was actually 7:00 pm! My watch had stopped for some mysterious reason. I say mysterious because after I reset the watch, it kept perfect time once again. So I stopped the washing machine in the middle of its run, ran out the door and went to the exhibit at Montmartre (just a cool Parisian art show with my friend in it!). I hung out there, then returned home at about 9:00 pm and restarted my washing machine. Now to the tragic end! When I removed the 70% wool sweater—it had shrunk. Boy had it shrunk - to a perfect fit for a 10-year-old child. Admitting defeat, the next day I took the shrunken 70% wool sweater to a nearby used clothing collection bin. No doubt to be sold once again to Guerrisol. But at least this time when someone buys it, it will be pre-shrunk.

Guerrisol:

19 avenue de Clichy
Metro: Place de Clichy

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67 avenue de Clichy

More "upscale" ladies fashion (it's all relative), than the other store

Metro: La Fourche

17 bis boulevard de Rochechouart

Don't be discouraged by the narrow entryway – the store continues back in a gigantic L shape. There's even a second floor with coats.

Metro: Barbès Rochechouart

Fondation d'Auteuil

40 rue La Fontaine

Metro Jasmin

Open Monday to Friday, 2:30 to 6, and the first Saturday of the month from 2:30 to 6.
Closed in August

A LOOK AT FLEA MARKETS

The major flea markets ("marchés aux puces") in Paris are run by licensed dealers. This means that although prices are definitely lower than in antique and second hand stores, they reflect this fact. If you really want to look carefully and seriously ("chiner") at rummage sales ("brocantes"), you might want to find out where the non-professionals are. For those of you who read French, there is an excellent monthly French magazine called "Aladin" where you will appreciate the articles on collecting and how to look for second hand goods. And at the back are lists of all the flea markets and rummage sales in France for the month.

Look for the word "foire" (fair) which means that normal everyday people can sell of their goods without the usual bureaucratic hassles from the French government. Also be on the lookout for "vide-greniers" (attic sales, I guess they have more attics than garages!).

Besides lists of all the flea markets and "foires" in Paris and all over France, Aladin lists special antique/secondhand markets in Paris that take place on an annual basis. And, it will let you know about the big antique/secondhand markets and fairs outside of Paris such as the one in early September in Lille, billed as "The Biggest Flea Market in Europe."

For more information about my Flea Market Tour, visit my website at:

<http://www.jeanne-feldman.com/shoppingtours.htm>

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First, remember to acknowledge the merchants by saying "Bonjour" when you enter their stands. This will put you off to a good start. Then, speak French if you can. That will continue the good start! Be prepared to pay with cash rather than a check or credit card so you can negotiate a bit (What's your best price? or "Quel est votre meilleur prix?"). Many merchants will lower their prices, at the end, by 20 to 30%, although it helps to know price ranges to begin with. Speaking of cash, keep it carefully hidden as there are sometimes gangs of pickpockets who circulate around the flea markets.

If you buy an item over 100 years old, you'll need a certificate of authenticity to avoid customs duty when shipped or carried home. An advantage of authorized dealers is that they can do this. And, they can also help you with shipping, which can be expensive, so be sure to calculate that into the final price. You may also be entitled to a "détaxe form", so ask for that too.

I have listed opening and closing hours, but frankly, they vary according to the discretion of the merchants! Some arrive earlier than others, stay later, leave earlier, etc. Some of the best deals can be made literally as the dealers unload their trucks in the morning. So, early birds definitely have an advantage (so they say--I'm not one of them). The Puce de Saint-Ouen is said to be the largest flea market in the world.

PUCE DE SAINT-OUEN (Saint-Ouen is just to the north of Paris)

Métro Porte de Clignancourt

Open Saturday between 8 & 9 to 5:30 & 6:30, Sunday 9 & 10 to 5:30 & 6:30 and Monday 9 & 11 to 5 & 6:30 (all very ish).

Friday is open for other dealers.

FINDING YOUR WAY THERE

If you take the metro to Porte de Clignancourt, you then have a 5 to 10 minute walk before you reach the market. Take Avenue de la Porte de Clignancourt and ignore all the junk stands set up on the sidewalk. This is not the market! As a matter of fact, it's much better to walk on the right hand side of the street since all the junk stands are on the left hand side, and it's terribly crowded. The market starts on the far side of the white overpass, on the left. On my Flea Market Tours, we take the 85 bus from Jules Joffrin or Porte de Clignancourt right into the market.

Once you get there, just take your time to wander around and enjoy the atmosphere. What I like about this flea market, the biggest in the world, is the sense of being in another place and time, far away from the "real" world. You'll have a sense of being removed from everyday reality, and the more you wander, the better it gets. This may

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compensate for the fact that you probably won't find super bargains here, although the prices are less than inside Paris proper. You also have all the advantages of buying from authorized dealers (like if anything comes up later, you know where to find them!).

This information comes from Jeanne Feldman's shopping guide *Best Buys and Bargains in Paris*. For more information visit Jeanne's website:

<http://www.jeanne-feldman.com>

5: DEPARTMENT STORES

PERSONAL SHOPPING SERVICE AT GALERIES LAFAYETTE

Usually I only recommend shopping at Parisian department stores during the bi-annual sales periods (*soldes*) in January and July, or if you want to buy things in several different categories. Not only can you use your 10% discount card obtained at the Welcome Desk but, if you spend 175 euros or more in one day, you can get a tax refund of 12% (for non-European customers) which can add up to a substantial savings.

There is, however, a little known service at Galeries Lafayette that can be very helpful. At the Housmann Lafayette Coupole store, on the second floor, they have a personal shopping service. It's *absolutely free of charge*, and the staff are professionals who take their job very seriously and will truly make an effort to help you with your shopping needs. In French, this service is called *Lafayette Conseil Personnalisé Mode et Beauté*. You do have to pay, of course, for the various clothes and extras (haircut, makeup, etc.) that you decide to buy.

You can use the shopping service to update your entire wardrobe, to purchase one special outfit for an event or to buy gifts. Events can range from a wedding to a cocktail party to a business trip. And the gifts can include birthdays, Christmas, weddings, or even that gift for the person who already has everything. You will be helped to choose the most appropriate gift, keeping in mind what the person likes, your taste and also your budget.

Be advised that you'll need to spend about two-and-a-half hours for the first appointment if it concerns your wardrobe. It really takes this long for the personal shoppers to get to know you, then to gather possible purchases from the entire store to bring back to you in your private dressing room. If you come back on a regular basis, it will take less time as, before you arrive, they will refer to your file with all the background information.

The head of the department for ten years, Isabelle Hervé Pénard, was trained about fifteen years ago by an American woman who performed the same service in the United States.

A great advantage of this service is that the personal shoppers know the store by heart. Frankly, Galeries Lafayette is huge, and fashions are organized by brand. This means that mini-boutiques are spread out, side by side, each having a selection of the same items of clothing in its particular brand. Therefore, if you're looking for a skirt, you have

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to go through each boutique, since there is no one place where all the skirts are grouped together. The personal shoppers can help you find what you want since they know the brands and what styles and items are currently being sold by each, plus where that particular boutique is located in the store. They can also help you mix and match the brands to create a look that is just right for you.

You may also have to deal with lifestyle differences between Paris and the U.S. Whether you're here for a short visit or a long stay, closets are going to be smaller in Paris. And, the styles are going to be different. You may realize after you're here that you are wearing only about a third of what is in your closet. I know we've all had the experience of looking into a stuffed closet, at the same time thinking "there isn't a thing to wear!" Working with a personal shopper can actually be a kind of therapy to help you get rid of all that clutter in your closet. "A clear closet will clear your mind," assures Isabelle. I think she's right.

You can help your personal shopper by preparing ahead. First, contact Galeries Lafayette to make an appointment: telephone: +33 (0)1 4282 3550, fax: +33(0)1 4282 8705, email: lafayettemode@gallerieslafayette.com. Isabelle then recommends the following: Invite a friend over. Empty out your closet. As you remove each item, make three piles. Pile one is for clothing that is always on target, makes you feel good about yourself, and has the right colors and shapes. Pile these items on top of your bed.

Pile two is for items that are almost there. Some may have been great in the past, but now you've changed and they're not as good as they were. Or, they're good, but missing something. Place these pieces on the edge of the bed, hanging over toward the floor.

Pile three is for the losers - items that you got to please someone else, to please yourself when you were depressed in a size too small or large, etc. These represent your past life--who you were but are no longer, or they never represented you at all, but like me, you still wear them to justify them hanging in your closet! Isn't it time to move on? Dump these items on the floor – and then give them away!

After that, try on items from pile number two (on the edge of the bed) and check them out with your friend. Depending on how they look, either put them on top of the bed with the winners or dump them on the floor with the give-aways.

Once you're finished, put back piles one and two into your closet. You'll be amazed at how much more room there is! Then, make a list of the pieces that are missing and a plan of what to buy and when. This is great preparation if you want or need to update your entire wardrobe. Of course, you can make your appointment whether or not you have practiced "closet" therapy!

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Most of us admit that French women are fashionable, but what does that really mean? We know that high fashion creates artistic visions that are usually unwearable by us ordinary mortals. But those visions are inspired from or become part of our environment - either what is happening or what we would like to happen. I believe that French women have learned how to blend current trends into their own wardrobe - finding "normal" adaptations of the extreme visions of the high fashion designers. In the end, it's a way of relating to the environment that we live in and finding our own personal identity.

So, true style is a balance between who you are inside and the fashion trends outside. The personal shoppers at Galeries Lafayette can definitely help you create your own personal style.

Free Fashion Shows at Galeries Lafayette

While in Paris, treat yourself to a free fashion show, and I do mean show. You'll watch in amazement as incredibly tall thin models prance along the runway in incredibly tall thin clothes. If you're just a wee bit normal (like 99.9% of us) you don't really even want to imagine yourself wearing some of the clothes! But, this is not about reality; this is your opportunity to enjoy a free fantasy organized by the folks at the department store Galeries Lafayette.

The fashion shows take place every Friday at 3 pm in the Lafayette Coupole store in the Salon Opéra on the seventh floor.

Although free, **you must reserve in advance** at +33 (0)1 4282 3025. The store address is 40 boulevard Haussmann, Métro Chaussée d'Antin. Use the Rue de Mogador entrance, and be sure to arrive a bit early (even though the show will probably start late) in order to find a good seat. Expect a crowd. Take advantage of the free soft drinks and snacks on each table. Enjoy the show!

6: FASHION OUTLET SHOPPING OUTSIDE PARIS

Although factory outlet shopping centers are now accepted in France, I have found one major difference between France and the US. The French really emphasize brand names ("les marques"). My personal theory is that they rely on brands so much because the non-brand clothes and shoes are often the worst quality, and, in the case of shoes, can literally destroy your feet (I know from personal experience!). So, each brand tends to handle its own resales and discounting rather than a multi-brand store (such as Ross or Marshall's) so familiar in the US.

Marques Avenue has a number of discount shopping centers in France, including one just outside Paris. I'm rather proud of myself as I recently figured out how to get there using public transportation. As the French say, "ce n'est pas evident" (it's not obvious). However, where there's a will, there's a way.

Before I tell you how to get there, here's some information about the place. There are several outlet stores at Marques Avenue that I really like. But be forewarned, the shopping center itself, in true discount style, is a cinderblock bunker, horribly ugly and not at all glamorous. But if you're a **real** discount shopper (like me) you'll actually feel a flash of recognition. "Wow, looks just like the San Fernando Valley (or New Jersey, or ...). It's just like home!"

Now let me tell you about Bensimon. I found out about this brand from a French friend who managed to get on their list for private sales. I am now on the list too. Quite frankly, I go twice a year, religiously – Goodness, I wouldn't want my name to be dropped from the list! Every time I go, there are more and more shoppers who have discovered this brand. The style of Bensimon clothes is deceptively simple: clean straight lines, clear pastel or darkish colors, great construction and the most wonderful fabric you can imagine (mostly natural fibers). I call it the "French girl next door" look. Most of my knit tops are now Bensimon – they never seem to wear out. The style is understated, but always with something special in the design. And every Bensimon item goes with every other Bensimon item (or just about). What this means is that when I am running late getting ready for an important appointment where I have to look well dressed, with total confidence I yank out a Bensimon top and then a Bensimon skirt or pants from my closet. And even if I have bought these items years apart (literally) – they will go together perfectly in terms of style, color and design. It's the Bensimon miracle.

The private sales are by invitation only, and they do collect those invitations at the door. The good news is that at Marques Avenue, there is an outlet store for Bensimon, the only one I know of in the Paris area. That's worth it for me!

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Among the other brands that have factory outlets at Marques Avenue are:

Antonelle: Nice, feminine designs, and most blouses are 100% cotton. Once, I happened to arrive the day before the end of the summer sales, and prices were even more reduced.

Apostrophe: well-known for knits and luxurious fabrics

Caroll: classic designs

Gérard Darel: young, active, and urban

1 2 3: feminine but constructed - they really have nice clothes in this chain, but I find them overpriced in the normal shops. I only buy this line during sales or in the outlet store.

Ventilo: flowing lines, using natural materials such as linen and cotton

For kids:

Jacadi

Catimini

Kookai

Shoes:

Bally, Timberland

Charles Jourdan

JB Martin

Ted Lapidus

That said, if you are pressed for time, I would not recommend traveling all the way out to this shopping center. Discount shopping is always chancy, and Marques Avenue is really not conveniently located. But if you do have the time, and you like clean lines and good fabrics, why not give it a try? This is how to get there by public transportation:

Take the metro line 4 to its northern terminus Porte de Clignancourt.

Take the exit that has a sign saying:

Boulevard d'Ornano côté n°s pairs

Passage du Mont-Cenis

rue Belliard vers le n° 56

Then, take either the 166 or 137 bus to the stop Marcel Paul. Once you exit the bus, go back in the direction the bus came from and you'll see a sign to Marques Avenue on the riverside, pointing left. It's about a 5 minute walk in that direction, on the left (only side it can be on since the Seine is on your right).

Marques Avenue

9 quai du Châtelier

93450 L'Île Saint Denis

website: www.marquesavenue.com

open Monday to Friday, 11 am to 8 pm, Saturday, 10 am to 8 pm

7: THE PERFECT SHOPPING TRIP

If you have one week in Paris, and you want to do some shopping as well as see (or re-see) some major sights, it's definitely possible to do both at the same time! Here is an itinerary for The Perfect Shopping Trip.

MONDAY: MUSÉE DU LOUVRE

This is a great day to visit the Musée du Louvre since the museum is closed on Tuesdays, and on Mondays there are fewer people. Exit the Metro at the Palais Royal/Musée du Louvre stop and take the exit (*sortie*) *Le Carrousel du Louvre/Musée du Louvre*, leading you directly to the beautiful underground shopping center, Carrousel du Louvre.

Stores of interest:

Nature et Découvertes is part of the same gift store chain as the store at Bercy Village, except that it's a bit larger. Upstairs is a beautiful children's department.

Les Minéraux has shelves filled to the brim with beautiful precious and semi-precious stones and jewelry.

Virgin Megastore is just past the inverted transparent pyramid that dips down into the shopping center. They have a full selection of books (including a section of books in English), videos, CDs and DVDs. Do remember, however, that the European/French video system (PAL/SECAM) will not play on US NTSC videos.

All the stores in the shopping center open on Mondays between 10 and 11 am.

Along the back of the shopping center is the Fossés Charles V. This is a fortified wall that surrounded Paris beginning in the 14th century and was completed in the 17th century by King Louis the 13th. The wall was discovered when they did the excavations for the shopping center, and now it lies exposed for all to see, free of charge

Opposite the inverted pyramid is an escalator leading up to the only food court I know of in Paris. You've got a selection of not only French, but Spanish, Chinese, Moroccan, Japanese and Italian food stands with lots of tables, and all at reasonable prices.

Hot Tip! Next to Virgin Megastore, is a back entrance into the Louvre! In fact, it's a security checkpoint where they scan your bags and purses. Often the line is short, but even when a bit crowded, it's shorter than the line into the main entrance to the Louvre above. After the security check, you enter a long corridor with – more stores!

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On your left is a Réunions des Musées Nationaux gift store, representing 32 French national museums. They have, among other things, post cards of Louvre classics, (including the Mona Lisa, of course), art reproductions, Venus de Milo mugs (!) and poster reproductions – all at correct prices. Then comes Les Enfants du Musée, a gift and bookshop for children, including books in English. At the end of the corridor on your right is the last store, the Librairie du Louvre, or bookstore.

Just across from the bookstores are several cafés and a restaurant if you prefer that to the food court.

Now comes the good part. In the Louvre, you can check your bags and packages at either of two vestiaires (cloakrooms) or use the bagagerie (baggage check) for larger items - for free! One vestiaire is hidden behind the escalator to the Denon wing, and the other is behind the escalator to the Richelieu wing. To find the bagagerie, just walk past the bookstore. The vestiaires are open until 5 pm and the bagagerie until 6:30 pm. I suggest that you shop in the late morning, eat lunch, and then check your packages and enjoy the museum!

TUESDAY: CATHÉDRALE NÔTRE DAME DE PARIS

Before you enter the cathedral itself, you may wish to explore the Crypte archéologique – Paris Nôtre Dame where you can view remains of buildings dating back to pre-Roman times, and others from the middle ages when the space in front of Nôtre Dame was a maze of densely packed buildings. The Crypte is open Tuesday to Sunday, 10 to 6.

After viewing the cathedral, built on the site of a Roman Temple of Jupiter, continue along the Rue Cloître Notre Dame. Starting with the store Paris Notre Dame at no. 6 bis, you'll pass several touristy gadget stores that are not at all bad for "kitschy" gifts (Eiffel Tower coasters, key rings and that sort of thing). The stores continue until Rue Cloître Notre Dame ends at the bridge to Ile St-Louis. Continue over the bridge, which brings you to the beginning of Rue Saint Louis en L'Île, a picturesque, narrow shopping street where you'll also find the original store for Bertillon ice cream, known by some as the best ice cream in Paris. The prices, while not discounted, are amazingly "correct" for all types of items from fresh flowers and jewelry, Venetian art masks, art post cards, cheese, bread and foie gras. There are also excellent art galleries. Some stores of note:

#81: Oliviers & Co sells olive oil and other olive derived products such as mustard and olive oil soap.

#79: Blasphème is my favorite jewelry store that sometimes has best buys.

#70: L'Arche de Noé has fantasy puppets, marionettes and toys.

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#65: Cacao et Chocolat is a fairly new chocolate store that also sells hot chocolate and macaroons.

#45: Galerie Alezé specializes in animal figurines, including a great collection of frogs

#35: Clair de Rêve sells beautifully crafted marionettes.

Most stores are open Tuesday through Sunday, from between 10:30 and 11:00 am to 7 or 7:30 pm.

WEDNESDAY: EGLISE DE LA MADELEINE

Don't spend too much time inside the church (sorry, sorry, but there's lots of great shopping to do in this neighborhood!).

Originally meant to be dedicated to the glory of Napoleon, the church was, in the end, dedicated by King Louis XVIII in 1815. In 1837 it was almost transformed into a train station (oh là là!), but in 1842 was definitively consecrated as a church.

After you exit the church, turn left and walk past two traffic lights. At the second light, turn right onto the Rue Duphot. You will then see a sign for the sporting goods and athletic ware store Decathlon. Looking for a great backpack? A new lock for your suitcase? Comfortable clothes? They've got it all there, including soft-sided luggage, in a huge space, including the Decathlon house brand at very reasonable prices. At the store entrance is the Nord-Est Café, a health food counter with delicious salads and desserts, naturally (after all, we're in France).

After you exit Decathlon, cross the Rue Duphot to no. 25, Le Cèdre Rouge, a stylish home decoration store.

As you continue along the place de la Madeleine, at no. 6 you'll find the mustard store, Maille which besides gourmet mustards, has gourmet vinegar and porcelain mustard containers. Then, go back up the right side of the church to Fauchon, the gourmet food haven, which has several stores. My personal preference, however, is Hédiard, across the square. The smell of freshly ground coffee in Hédiard is to die for, and they are also famous for their wine selection.

There are a lot more stores off the Place de la Madeleine that we visit on my Best Buy Madeleine Tour. For more information, visit my website:

<http://www.jeanne-feldman.com/shoppingtours.htm>

THURSDAY: THE EIFFEL TOWER

After the Eiffel Tower was built, the people in the neighborhood were absolutely convinced that it would collapse, crushing them all to death. Famous artists of the period even signed a petition against the tower, and one signer left Paris for good so as never to look at that "metallic carcass" again. How times have changed!

If you visit the Eiffel Tower in the morning, you will not only to avoid the crowds, but you can also take advantage of one of the open-air markets in the city of Paris, the Marché Saxe-Breteuil.

All over the city, open-air produce markets take place, twice a week (generally on a weekday and then on Saturday or Sunday). This particular market is open Thursday and Saturday, from 9 am to about 2 pm. For a complete list of all the open-air and covered markets in Paris, go to the information desk of the Hotel de Ville, located inside the Salon d'Accueil Informations at #29 Rue de Rivoli. Ask for the list "des marchés parisiens alimentaires."

I suggest walking from the Tower to the market, although you'll have to allow about 30 minutes. Exit the Tower towards the Champs de Mars and walk all the way to Ecole Militaire. Then walk around Ecole Militaire to either Avenue de Suffren or Avenue Duquesne. Take either of these streets to Avenue de Ségur and turn back, because between these two streets is Avenue de Saxe where the market starts, on a traffic island, in the middle of the street.

If you want to reduce the time a bit, you can take a bus for part of the way. Exit the Tower on the side facing the Seine and go past the Pilier Ouest. Cross the Quai Branley and on the left side is the stop for the Bus 82, direction "Luxembourg". Get off at the stop Joffre-Suffren and continue down Avenue de Suffren in the same direction as the bus to Avenue de Ségur. Turn left. Take Avenue de Ségur to Avenue de Saxe, and voila the market.

In the market you'll find not only food stands, but also stands selling discount clothing for adults, adorable children's clothes, shoes, fabrics, cookware, purses, hats and scarves, and even antique furniture. You can also buy terrific snacks and roasted nuts to sample. These markets are part of what makes Paris a really special city to live in.

There is a list of the best open air markets in my shopping guide, *Best Buys and Bargains in Paris*. Or you may be interested in taking a Gastronomic Tour which includes an open-air market, a covered market plus a food shopping street. Visit my site at: <http://www.jeanne-feldman.com/shoppingtours.htm>

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FRIDAY: ABBAYE SAINT-GERMAIN DES PRÉS

Once ruled by abbots, Abbaye Saint-Germain was a center for the study of ancient manuscripts during the middle ages. Founded by Childebert I, the son of Clovis, it was one of the most important Benedictine monasteries in France and today is one of the oldest churches in Paris.

The Rue Bonaparte, which starts at the far end of the church, is a great place to window shop rather than shop (although you never know). This street and the Rue Jacob that cuts it at a right angle are full of top of the line, exclusive stores, selling decorative fabrics, antiques, rare books, jewelry and fine art. This is the best of the best – at appropriately high prices. One good example of a decorative fabric store is Simrane at no. 23 Rue Bonaparte.

Walk back down to Boulevard Saint-Germain and turn left toward Odéon. As you're walking down Boulevard Saint Germain, you can admire the great stores there as well.

Opposite the Rue de Buci is Rue Montfaucon, and at the end of this one block street is one of the covered food markets of Paris at 4 Rue Lobiineau. Continue on Boulevard Saint-Germain and turn left on Rue de Seine. At no. 64 is Fromage 31 (open Tuesday to Friday, 10 to 3 and 4:30 to 8), a cheese shop, selling a wonderful variety of farm fresh cheese and other dairy products. What makes this store special is that it has "dégustations" or samplings of different types and flavors. You can order a cheese plate ("assiette") of 4, 6 or 8 selections plus a green salad and bread (but of course!). Wine can be ordered by the bottle or by the glass. The owner of the store will be happy to help you choose.

Still continuing on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, you will come to Mouton à 5 Pattes at no. 138. This is the real thing – discount name brand fashion for both men and women. On hangers and in piles around the store, you'll find a selection of men's and women's clothing. Although the selection can be a bit uneven, as long as you're in the area, it's worth checking out.

Continue down Boulevard Saint-Germain towards Odéon, and turn right at Carrefour de l'Odéon which is opposite the Rue de l'Ancienne Comedie. As you circle around, you'll find Rue Monsieur le Prince. At no. 17 is one of the best secondhand English language bookshops in Paris, the San Francisco Book Co. It was founded in 1997 by two Americans, one of whom had owned a bookshop in San Francisco but had always dreamed of owning one in Paris – hence the name. Open Monday to Saturday, 11 to 9 and Sunday 2 to 7:30, it's a jewel of a bookstore. Although small, it's chock full of used English language books. Plus, they will give you the best value in town for books you

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want to sell back. Although mostly paperback, they also carry some hardback books, and have many categories besides fiction, including history, dictionaries and even comics. This is a great place to trade in those books you've been reading on your trip.

SATURDAY: CENTRE NATIONAL D'ART ET DE CULTURE GEORGES POMPIDOU (OTHERWISE KNOWN AS BEAUBOURG)

Besides the 20th century art collection, I really enjoy the Fontaine Stravinsky, featuring works by Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint-Phalle, located in the Place Igor Stravinsky, just to the south of the Beaubourg. I love the colorful fantasy, sculptures in the fountain that spin round and round. At the back of the fountain is the Saint Merri Church, for which construction started in the year 1500, looking dark and mysterious. The Center is closed Tuesdays and is open the rest of the week from 11 am to 8:50 pm.

At 52 rue Rambuteau, is the hardware store Leroy Merlin Beaubourg. The picture frame department is at the front of the store and to the right. They have a great selection of all different kinds of frames which could make an unusual gift. If you go down the escalator one flight to the garden department, at the back and to your left you will find beautiful artificial flowers made from fabric. Unless you need hardware items, skip the basement level.

Outside Image de Demain, at 141 Rue Saint Martin you'll see artistic postcards. Inside they have posters, prints and art reproductions. Upstairs is a light and airy tea salon. Just watch your step going up the steep, wooden stairs!

SUNDAY: PARC DE BERCY

Unless the weather is totally uncooperative, today's site is a must. In my view, the Parc de Bercy is the most splendid park in Paris, situated in an area that used to be crowded with wine warehouses on the edge of the Seine. Words cannot describe the magic gardeners have worked using flowers, leaves, light and movement. I call it "new gardening", and you can now see examples of it in older, more formal gardens in Paris. In addition, the Parc de Bercy has about 200 trees, many over 100 years old. Occasionally, one will loom up in the middle of your path – which simply turns around the tree and then continues on its way.

Get off the Métro at the Bercy stop. To find the park entrance, walk to the left and along side the Palais Omnisports de Paris-Bercy, a huge sporting events and concert venue that seats 17,000 people. Then, just stroll along the length of the park, which is so huge it is divided in two by a street, with arching bridges that cross over.

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In addition, the fully automated Metro line 14 is a real life Disney ride. Just seat yourself in the first car and then watch, hypnotized, as you blast down the tunnel. So far, the French have managed to keep this beautifully refurbished, "in" place pretty much to themselves.

At the far end of the park, at the Métro Cour Saint-Emilion, is an outdoor pedestrian shopping mall, Bercy Village. situated in remodeled wine warehouses from the 19th century, the stores are not only beautiful to wander into (and out of), but you can also dine or just have a café in a great variety of charming restaurants at reasonable prices. You can even see the train tracks that were used to transport the wine to the warehouses! And at the far end is the best, most state-of-the-art movie theater complex in Paris, the **UGC Ciné-Cité Bercy** with about 20 theatres, all with stadium seating and excellent sound quality. Bercy Village currently attracts young, trendy French people.

Some great gift stores:

Côté Maison: Home decoration and household items from dried flowers to muffin molds, Marriage Frères Tea.

La Cure Gourmande: A cookie and candy store, based on traditional recipes. In the center of the store, you can choose the cookies you want and pay by weight. Not only are the products delicious, but the boxes and tins are beautifully designed.

Sephora: A special branch of this chain, specializing in skin and hair products.

Occitane: skincare products and perfume based on natural ingredients

Oliviers & Co: Olive oil and other goodies including soap, mustard, vinegar and whole olives.

Nature et Découvertes: This is the same chain as the store at Carousel du Louvre shopping center.

Animalis: I visit this store not for gifts but because it's my favorite pet store. Not only do they have the obligatory cats, dogs, fish and birds, but also rabbits, mice, gerbils, hamsters and even rats (who are not so bad when you look at them all piled together behind glass). Occasionally even a ferret or two--also real cute behind glass.

Most of the stores are open Monday through Sunday, 11 am to 7 pm.

The Perfect Shopping Trip has come to an end! But I do hope you continue to explore Paris on your own for both sites and shopping. We've just skimmed the surface. Paris awaits ...

BIO

I had always dreamed of living in France (for no logical reason). Finally, after giving up hope of ever achieving this dream, I was offered a job in Paris, giving me the opportunity to live and work in France for a minimum of five years. I must say that the move from Los Angeles to Paris was the easiest move I have ever made in a series of "big moves" throughout my life. I grew up in New Jersey and moved to Michigan and then to Northern California to go to university. After that I moved to Southern California where I worked in non-fiction video distribution.

After the move to France, once the honeymoon period was over, it was tough. I had to learn how to deal with a completely different way of life and ways of thinking. In fact, I had never felt so uprooted in my life. I learned that the process of putting down roots in "foreign" soil definitely does not take place overnight, but I had to do it or give up my dream. In the end, I found that I rather was well-equipped to handle this challenge because I had always lived several cultures – my parents were both born in Austria, so I had always felt a bit "European" in America. It was only after living in France that I discovered how "American" I was! I am happy to say that sixteen years later, I am still living and working in France.

Since I am now in between two cultures, I can put that experience to use for others. I discovered that you really have to develop the ability to step back and examine the most basic values of your life. Values that you thought were universal turn out to be cultural. It's only once you begin to see from another vantage point that that you can take advantage of living and experiencing two different cultures.

Shopping may seem to be mundane. But don't we piece together our lives from the little, day-to-day experiences? It still constantly amazes me how even all the "little things" are different in France!