

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Shopping Tours	3
Shopping Etiquette	4
French Zen Shopping Attitude	4
Final Thoughts	4
1: Shopping Strategy	5
Store Cards and Tax Refund	5
Paris Sales	5
Designer Discount and Resale	6
2: Gifts	6
3: Beauty and Health Secrets	7
4: Resale Shopping	8
Clothing	8
A look at flea markets	9
5: Department Stores	10
Personal shopping service at Galeries Lafayette	10
6: Fashion Outlet Shopping Outside Paris	11
7: The Perfect Shopping Trip	11
Bio	13

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....

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>

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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)....

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.

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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.

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....

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

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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 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 store do....

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.

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, ...

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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'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

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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....

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....

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?

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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 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>

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 Houssmann 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....

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!"

....

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:

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Nature et Decouvertes 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!

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

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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!

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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!