

LA BELLE FRANCE

THE SOPHISTICATED



GUIDE TO FRANCE®

Guy Savoy

A Wizard in the Kitchen

If Dumbledore needed a three-star chef for the Hogwarts reunion banquet, he couldn't conjure up a better caterer than Guy Savoy, a chef who is obsessed by the magic of his trade. "Magic is the only word for it," Savoy insists. "This is all about transforming raw materials into pleasure. My first revelation came in childhood, watching a mixture of flour, sugar and eggs go into the oven. In a matter of seconds, it turned into something that smelled delicious and tasted fantastic. Cooking creates joy. And it's a joy that's concrete, not virtual, unlike so much of what we encounter in life."

And for anyone who doesn't think that he's encountered enough magic and concrete joy on the dining table lately... may we suggest ordering Guy Savoy's *homard Breton cuit en vapeur froide* as a first course? We're not going to breathe another word about this powerhouse starter, but suffice to say, it would have earned Hermione Granger an A+ on her Potions exam.

When Guy Savoy opened his first Parisian restaurant in 1987 after honing his skills at Troisgros, he set out to create a "hyper-civilized realm" where his guests can be pampered (and touched by gastronomic magic) for three or four blissful hours. On the heels of a glamorous design makeover by Jean-Michel Wilmotte, a taupe-and-toffee-colored venue that showcases Savoy's collection of traditional African and contemporary Western art, the Guide Michelin awarded the restaurant three stars in 2002.

The menu is filled with a medley of Savoy's new and old treasures. One of the "musts" for diehard

Savoy fans is the legendary *soupe d'artichaut à la truffe noir* that comes with a brioche smeared with mushroom/truffle butter. On the other hand, it's hard to surpass the *rouget barbet "rôti-farci"* for sheer fantasy. The red mullet is split, filled with a delicate gratin arranged in a fish-scale pattern, and touched up with leaves of fresh basil.

Savoy is an inventive, 21st century chef, but he doesn't mind borrowing from the best (and earthiest) of his predecessors.

He is one the rare chefs who offers an authentic *volaille de Bresse* poached in a pig's bladder, an early-known form of vacuum-cooked chicken that seals in all the juices and flavors that was invented by the great Fernand Point in Vienne. The one thing that you won't find on Savoy's menu is beef. Even in the land of Charolais, Savoy maintains that he's never found any beef that is consistently up to his standards. There is, however, *côte de veau* supplied by the famed Robert Morel or the Boucheries Nivernaises.

Complete your dinner with *textures de fraises* - a refreshingly light combination of strawberry *granité*, jam, fruit juice and razor-thin strawberry chips. The newest dessert on the 2009 menu is the *boule noir*... a globe of ultra-dark

chocolate encasing pear sorbet. The dessert cart rolls right out of the world of magic: pralined rice pudding, marshmallows flavored with grapefruit and lemon, chocolate tarts and caramel creams... everything but chocolate frogs and Every-Flavor Beans.



Guy Savoy

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The encyclopedic wine list doesn't skip a beat. It starts out with a Corsican white from Calvi for 45€,



photo Sebastian STRAESSLE et Florence BOTE

rounds off the top with 1999 Romanée Conti for 10,500€, and doesn't miss much in between. The 1993 Dumas Gassac is 305€ (wine-lovers can only dream of the time when that Languedoc vineyard was practically giving the wine away) and the 1997 Léoville Las Cases is 420€. This is definitely the place to splurge on a favorite vintage.

Many of the dishes that we've mentioned above are on the (hold your breath) 245€ fixed price menu. An even grander selection is available on the (hold your breath) 345€ menu. In fact, this is one of the few three-star restaurants where ordering *à la carte* can save money. However, Guy Savoy is a populist at heart. Through May 10, he's experimenting with an offer to accept a limited amount of diners for a special, reserve-in-advance, 100€ menu. This just debuted on May 1. Let's congratulate him for the idea and hope that he can continue it long enough for LBF readers to profit from it.

In the meantime, it's not necessary to go all the way to Paris for a taste of artichoke/truffle soup. In 2006, Guy Savoy opened a restaurant at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas. The Guy Savoy concept seems to travel very well. Every spin-off bistro he's opened has been good. His three satellite restaurants (see below) are all directed by former managers and *maitres d'hôtel* at his three-star dining room. The Las Vegas restaurant is run by his son and to judge from the reviews - "One of the 10 new restaurants that count in America" (New York Times); "Best new restaurants in the



photo Eric BRISSAUD

world" (Travel & Leisure) - the magic has survived the transplant to the desert.

That's good to know because Guy Savoy has three new projects on his plate: A restaurant in Moscow; a dining room in the Marina Bay Sands due to open in Singapore in Spring 2010; and last-but-not-least, a "gastronomic partnership" at Tiger Woods Dubai, a 50,000-hectare manor/spa/complex to be built around a golf-course designed by Tiger Woods, due to open in 2012.

And here's another innovation: Forget about bringing your children to the office, when you can treat them to **Guy Savoy** instead. Any 15 to 17- year-old who dines at this three-starred restaurant with two adults is entitled to a free meal. Any 12 to 17-year-old profits the same deal at Guy Savoy's three satellite restaurants. (As Guy Savoy intends this venture to be an initiation to fine dining, this applies to only one adolescent per table.) It's the Savoy way of bringing the magic to a new generation or, as he jokes, making first contact with the clientele of 2030. **Le Chiberta** (3 rue Arsène Houssaye, 75008; Tel 01.53.53.42.00); **Les Bouquinistes** (53 quai des Augustins, 75005; Tel: 01.43.25.45.94); and **L'Atelier Maître Albert** (1 rue Maître Albert, 75005; Tel: 01.56.81.30.01).

Guy Savoy. 18 rue Troyon, 75017. Tel: 01.43.80.40.61. Fax: 01.46.22.43.09. www.guysavoy.com Closed Saturday lunch, Sunday and Monday; August; December 24 to January 2. All major credit cards.

Restaurant	Cuisine	Decor	Service	Wine List	Value	Total
Guy Savoy	19	19	19	19	19	95

The LA BELLE FRANCE Rating System

- 20 - Perfect; As Fine As It Gets
- 19 - Extraordinary; Nearly Flawless
- 18 - Excellent; At Times Memorable
- 17 - Very Good
- 16 - Above Average
- 15 - Average; Uninspired
- 14 and below - Varying Degrees of Dissatisfaction



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Paris Day Trip: *Le Julianon in Senlis*

Long before Compiègne, Fontainebleau, and Versailles, the French royal family spent a large portion of their time in Senlis, a village on the southern edge of Picardy. When Louis V, the last of the Carolingian dynasty, died here after a hunting accident, the Archbishop of Reims and a council of lords convened at Senlis castle in 987 to choose a new ruler, Hugues Capet.

The glory days of Senlis were the 12th and 13th centuries. The cornerstone for its gorgeous Cathedral was laid in 1153 and Philippe II had to enlarge the burgeoning city's 3rd century Gallo-Roman ramparts by 1181. The 100 Years War devastated the town and although Senlis rallied briefly after its support of Henri IV in 1577, Henri IV was the last king to reside there.

On the tourism front, all the guide books agree: Senlis rates a detour for the Cathedral, the 12th century Saint-Frambourg Chapel commissioned by Queen Adelaide, its picturesque streets, and four museums. On the first Sunday of every month, the Tourist Office offers visits to the ancient ramparts. Information: 03.44.53.06.40; contact@senlis-tourisme.fr

Concerts are frequently scheduled in the Cathedral.

The food guidebooks are less unanimous when it comes to *Le Julianon*. While Michelin doesn't even acknowledge the restaurant's existence, the 2009 Gault-Millau singles out Chef Richard Baima, who opened it two years ago, as one of its Young Talents of 2009.

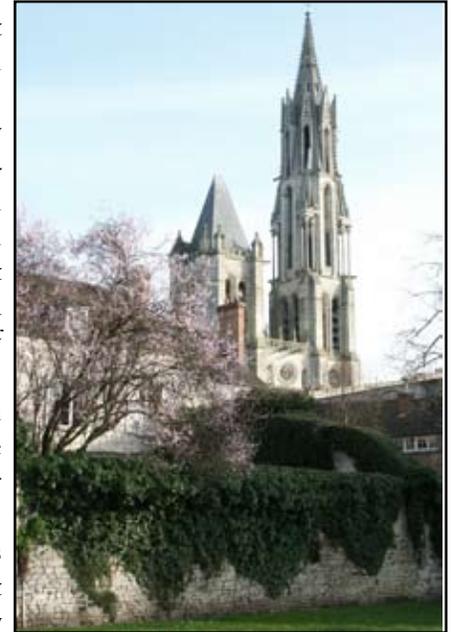
Le Julianon is situated in a pretty stone house on the



northwest edge of town. (Follow directions to the Sous-Préfecture to find it. The Place Gérard de Nerval is located between the Gallo-Roman and medieval ramparts.) There are only sixteen seats so reservations are necessary. Richard Baima, who worked as a second for Alain Senderens at

Lucas Carton for nearly ten years, is bringing a touch of royal sophistication back to Senlis.

At lunchtime, the chef reduces the offerings to a single, ultra-simple, 24€ *prix fixe* that changes daily. On the day we visited, there was plenty of sparkle. Open-face ravioli topped with beets and shredded crabmeat was bathed in a fluffy cloud of cauliflower cream, and sea bream came with delicate Noirmoutier potatoes. Dessert – warmed raspberries with a basil sorbet – was deliciously light.



The menu gets more involved at dinner (menus 35€ to 55€) with choices that include rabbit with eggplant and tuna with mozzarella. The brief wine list, which coyly offers names but no dates, ranges between a classic Bourgueil, 24€, to Guigal's Hermitage, 140€. A generously-poured glass of white Cheverny is 4.5€.

Le Julianon. 5 Place de Gérard-de-Nerval, Senlis. Tel: 03.44.32.12.05. Closed Sunday, Monday and Saturday lunch. VISA

Restaurant	Cuisine	Decor	Service	Wine List	Value	Total
Le Julianon	17	16	16	16	17	82

Getting There: Senlis is 50 kilometers north of Paris on the A1 highway (exit 8). Trains from Paris's Gare du Nord to Chantilly (with a bus connection to Senlis) take approximately one hour. A round-trip ticket costs 18€.

Paris When it Sizzles...

The Hot New Restaurants

Miroir

Sebastien (chef) and Matthieu (front room), old pals from *Aux Lyonnais*, opened **Miroir** last September. Since then, it's become the most sought-after dinner ticket in Montmartre. The raspberry/dove-grey dining room, lit by a pyramidal skylight, channels Bistro 101: red naugahyde banquettes, wooden chairs, and old-time tiled floors.

The food outclasses bistro fare by far. A creamy *rillettes* starter- made with slivered scorpion fish, dusted with toasted pine-nuts, topped with shredded vegetables, and served with golden slices of brioche - hits all the high notes. The layered goat cheese salad is brightened up with fennel, and the roast lamb comes with Miroir's homemade *harissa*.

The chef does especially wonderful things with fish. *Turbotin* served in a light morel cream sauce is cooked perfectly and garnished with a mixture of miniature rose-turnips, artichokes, carrots, and green asparagus. The swordfish accompanied by a Greek-style medley of peppers is equally good. There are no printed menus. The day's choices, inspired by the market, are simply chalked on a board. Items that catch everyone's fancy - like a tuna/avocado crumble - sell out early.

The brief wine list is considerably more formal and has a very wide range. Jean-Marc Boileau's absolutely scrumptious Aligoté (16€) shares its editorial space with a 700€ Yquem and 1989 Cheval Blanc (1,000€). The staff tells us that the White Horse wine *has* been ordered on several

occasions. Especially after dark, Miroir reflects a very fancy gourmet crowd.

The 18€ lunch comes with one of five *plats du jour*, a glass of wine (which, we note approvingly, is poured generously) and a *café gourmand* (expresso with a trio of sweets which included a fluffy rice pudding, home-made violet-scented marshmallows, and a chocolate-filled *financier* biscuit on the day of our visit). The three-course dinner is 32€.

Miroir. 94 rue des Martyrs, 75018. Tel: 01.46.06.50.73. Closed Sunday night and Monday; Sunday: Brunch only. All major credit cards.

Restaurant	Cuisine	Decor	Service	Wine List	Value	Total
Miroir	17	16	17	17	19	86

Glou

This seven-month-old duplex restaurant across the street from the Picasso Museum sits on one of the trendiest strips in the Marais, sharing its side of the street with Antik Batik; Paris's most stylish crepe house, Breizh Café (LBF - August 2008), and Pink Flamingo, an iconoclastic pizzeria where the curried version is especially popular.

Adventurous cooking (and a 17€ lunch menu) is not the draw for stars like Carole Bouquet and Marion Cotillard, who have both been spotted at **Glou**. Founder Julien Fouin, the former editor of the culinary magazine *Régail*, puts all the emphasis on product. Wooden platters of the finest Spanish ham, lomo, or chorizo (9€ to 18€) are the most popular starters. Sardines are served straight from the tin.

Ah... but these are sardines with a pedigree. Like most of the clientele, everything on the menu sports a designer label. The oysters come from Utah Beach, the "un-endangered" tuna carpaccio once swam around the Ile de Yeu, the beef is strictly Salers, the blond lentils are from Saint-Flour, and the sweets are signed by celebrity baker Jean Genin.

Cooked dishes - like burgers with sweet potatoes or wild Madagascar langoustines served with *mélisse* pesto, both 22€ - are correct but far from thrilling. Go for a bottle because the wines-by-the-glass are served by Scrooge. The cellar rounds up all the fashion-conscious names like Marcel LaPierre. (His famous, bio/natural 2007 Morgon



photo B. Lomont

The team at Miroir

is 33€.) Be prepared to shout – wooden floors make Glou’s decibel level deafening at prime-time – and don’t expect all the designer diners to be French. Glou has been heavily colonized by the international set.

Glou. 101 rue Vieille du Temple, 75003. Tel: 01.42.74.44.32. Closed Tuesday. VISA.

Restaurant	Cuisine	Decor	Service	Wine List	Value	Total
Glou	16	16	16	16	16	80

La Fidelité

There’s an x-rated Mickey Mouse statue by the front door to shock the *bourgeoisie*, but the menu at **La Fidelité** is quite conservative... and rather sparsely-spiced. This duplex brasserie which opened in January a few blocks from the newly-renovated Gare de l’Est (TGV to Reims and Strasbourg) immediately captivated the *fashionista* crowd. If you long to meet Kate Moss, this is one of the places where that can happen.

The starter menu (which could have been i-phoned from nearly any continental bistro closer than Mars) includes tomato/mozzarella plates, marinated salmon, *foie gras* with cassis jam, *tête de cochon* with lentils, and an excellent vegetable salad topped with melted parmesan. The most adventurous offering is a (very good) baked sardine filled with herb-laced white cheese.

Main courses – duck confit, steak *béarnaise*, ray with grapefruit – stick close to the comfort food register. There’s no yuzu, no designer salsa, no bizarre Asian peppercorns. The baked monkfish with a thin herbal crust is a trifle dry but it’s rescued by a warm, tangy cabbage slaw. Scorpion fish is served on a bed of finely flaked sweet potatoes. The dessert with the most flash is caramelized French toast.



photo Julien Weber

La Fidelité

The dazzle comes from the décor (slender white columns, hardwood floors, and just the right touch of burgundy on the banquettes) and A+ people-watching. By 10 pm, all tables are filled with Vogue/GQ-ish diners, even on weekday nights. The value-conscious wine list features ever-dependable Michel Laroche



photo Julien Weber

Chardonnay, 24€; the 2007 Château Minuty for the refreshingly non-inflationary price of 32€; and Alphonse Mellot’s mellow white Sancerre for 36€. Higher rollers can opt for 1983 Château Lafite Rothschild, 620€. The two-course lunch special is 15€. Count on spending roughly 75€ for dinner for two before wine.

La Fidelité. 12 rue de la Fidelité, 75010. Tel: 01.47.70.19.34. Open daily. All major credit cards.

Restaurant	Cuisine	Decor	Service	Wine List	Value	Total
La Fidelité	16	19	17	16	17	85

Chez Prune

While casual **Chez Prune** is not exactly late-breaking news anymore, it has maintained an admirable cool quotient for years. For visitors who haven’t yet dipped into the trendy Canal Saint Martin scene north of République, it will seem very new indeed.

Canal life is never fast-paced and although we hate to brand Prune’s service as “slow”... we suggest showing up for *café au lait* at 10 am if you want get lunch by 1 pm. Luckily, we had the



perfect book to make the hours speed by: *Le livre bouffon* by NYU professor Allen Weiss (Editions Le Seuil), published last month, is a cleverly paced, lightly fictionalized poetic fantasy that traces Baudelaire's footsteps all along this scenic waterway.

Prune's cuisine, slightly more prosaic, changes daily and has an aura of Vermont health-food. A giant-sized bowl of *farfalle* pasta in a zesty tomato/parmesan sauce is topped with a thick layer of sautéed zucchini and steamed broccoli. The vegetarian plate – not recommended for dieters – is heaped with hefty slices of potato/onion tortilla, shredded red cabbage, sautéed eggplant and onions and a triangle of gratin dauphinois. Steak comes with green pepper salsa, charlotte potatoes, pleurotte mushrooms and a touch of lime.

All of the above are priced at 12 to 13€. Desserts – raspberry tiramisu, farmer's cheese with berries, chocolate meringues – are 5.30€. The pleasant selection of wines-by-the-glass includes a summery Provençal rosé for 3.5€; the house Champagne is 8€/flute. Prune stays open until 2 am. The Saint Martin Canal makes a pleasing alternative to those all-too-familiar Seine quays.

Chez Prune. 36 rue de Beaurepaire/71 Quai Valmy, 75010. Tel: 01.42.41.30.47. Open daily. VISA.

Restaurant	Cuisine	Decor	Service	Wine List	Value	Total
Chez Prune	15	15	15	15	18	78

New Paris Hotel *Crowne Plaza Champs-Elysées*

The Crowne Plaza had a soft opening last September, a press opening last month, and it won't be totally finished until the restaurant opens next fall. However, its fifty-six luxurious bedrooms are already up to cruise speed. The hotel spans three buildings on a quiet street east of the Etoile: a standard Haussmann building, a 70s office building, and a turreted brick edifice that served as the stables for the Counts of Breteuil.

For this reason, the rooms have widely differing dimensions. The sprawling penthouse suite number 502, which sells for 1,600€ in the high season, has low mansarded ceilings but several other treats to make up for that: a private balcony (large enough for a dinner table and two deck chairs) and a chauffeured Rolls Royce that's included in the room

price. Rooms on the first floor have the 12 foot ceilings... but no Silver Cloud.

The smallest standard doubles like number 208, 260€ (low season)/ 450€ (high season), are spacious enough for a Queen-size bed. To make these rooms feel larger, the walls to the bath area slide back and forth so the room can be re-modulated at will. Tech goodies include free internet, internet keyboards that connect to the flat screen televisions, and ipods.

Designer Bruno Borrione, who formerly worked with Philippe Starck, has painted the guestrooms marshmallow white. The visual excitement comes from black-and-white reproductions of Italian ceiling frescos and bright splashes



© Crowne Plaza Paris Champs-Elysées



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of color: crimson and chocolate draperies, Missoni and Kenzo pillows. Check the website for special promotional prices. (There's even a weekend that comes with a tour of Paris in a fabled 2-Chevaux car.)

Crowne Plaza Paris Champs-Élysées. 64 avenue Marceau, 75008. Tel: 01.44.43.36.36. Fax: 01.42.84.10.30. www.crowneplazaparischampselysees.com Fifty-six rooms and suites from 260€ to 1,600€. Breakfast: 24€ or 30€. Elevator available. All major credit cards.



© Crowne Plaza Paris Champs-Élysées

French Summer Festivals 2009

Aix-en-Provence. Magic and mythology set the pace from June 27 to July 31: *Götterdämmerung*, *Orpheus in Hell*, *Idomeneo* and the *Enchanted Flute*. Tel: 08.20.92.29.23. From the US: 04.34.08.02.17. www.festival-aix.com

Avignon. Works by Wajdi Mouawad, Krzysztof Warlikowski, Johan Simons and Paul Koek headline the **2009 Avignon Theater Festival** from July 7 to 29. Maguy Marin, Amos Gitai, and Dutch artist Jan Fabre (with an English-language première subtitled in French) are also on the roster. Tel: 04.90.14.14.14 (from June 15). www.festival-avignon.com

Beaune. Except for *Così fan Tutte*, it's mostly Handel from July 3 to 26: *Rinaldo*, *Ariodonte*, *Julius Caesar* and *Acis & Galatea*. Tel: 03.80.22.97.20. Fax: 03.80.24.90.09. www.festivalbeaune.com

Carcassonne. Electro-Pop *Depeche Mode* will light up the medieval ramparts at the **Festival des 2 Cités** on July 6. From July 4 to 31, the festival also hosts Rigoletto, Patricia Kaas, Seal, Keziah Jones, Francis Cabrel and Lenny Kravitz. Tel: 04.68.11.59.15 www.festivaldecarcassonne.com

Colmar. The **Colmar Festival** honors Sviatoslav Richter from July 2 to 14. Tel: 03.89.20.68.97. Fax: 03.89.41.34.13. www.festival-colmar.com

Juan-les-Pins. Jeff Beck, MC Solaar and the Roy Hargrove Big Band will play under the pines at the seaside **Jazz à Juan** from July 11 to 19. www.antibesjuanlespins.com

La Rochelle. Tune into French FM from July 10 to 14 at **Francofolies** with Jane Birkin, Julien Doré, Benabar and Ayo. www.francofolies.fr

Lorient. The **Inter-Celtique** party kicks off on July 31 with a traditional *cotriade* dinner. Through August 9, expect

plenty of bagpipes. This year, the festival honors Galicia. www.festival-interceltique.com

Lyon. From June 5 to August 1, the ever-eclectic **Nuits de Fourvière** will stage *The Enchanted Flute*, *West Side Story*, ballets by Sasha Waltz and Sylvie Guillem and a Brecht cabaret in the Roman amphitheater. Tel: 04.72.57.15.40. Fax: 04.72.57.15.49. www.nuits-de-fourviere.org

Nice. BB King, Tracy Chapman, Sonny Rollins and Julien Doré headline the **2009 Nice Jazz Festival** which will be slightly smaller than usual due to renovations in the Cimiez arena. www.podcastjournal.net/Nice-Jazz-Festival-2009

Orange. Italy reigns at the **2009 Chorégies**: *La Traviata* (July 11 and 14) and *Cavalleria Rusticana* plus *Pagliacci* (August 1 and 4). Tel: 04.90.34.24.24. Fax: 04.90.11.04.04. www.choregies.com

Reims. From June 18 to July 22, music takes to the streets for the 20th annual **Flaneries de Reims**. Tel: 03.26.36.78.06. www.flaneriesreims.com

www.flaneriesreims.com

Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat. *Orpheus*, *La Bohème* and *Così fan Tutte* are scheduled at the ultra-chic **Azurial Opera Festival** at the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild from August 18 to 30. US telephone in Massachusetts: (617) 492-2968, Fax: (617) 864 6518. www.azurialopera.com

Vézelay. Handel oratorios are scheduled for the 10th anniversary of the sacred music festival held in the Basilica from August 20 to 23. Tel: 03.86.32.39.78. www.rencontresmusicalesdevezelay.com

Vienne. Gilberto Gil, Roy Hargrove, Youssou N'Dour, Seal, Wynton Marsalis – and even Barbara Hendricks – will present Jazz and Blues concerts in the Roman amphitheatre for **Jazz à Vienne** from June 27 to July 10. Tel: 08.92.70.20.07. www.jazzavienne.com

Update: Barging Through Burgundy

In June 2007, we brought you glad tidings of “**Le Premier**”, a clean-cut, yacht-style barge that was cruising on the Burgundy canal. Le Premier isn’t around in that format anymore, but we’re delighted to report that the intimate, bohemian and luxuriously arty “**Fandango**” barge has left its moorings on the Canal du Midi (LBF - July 2006) for its first full season in the Burgundian Gold Coast.

Built in the 1930s, the sleek Fandango is a barge-lover’s barge and many professionals confide that it’s their favorite property. Owner-operator Hazel Young (British yet LA-by-adoption) is a professionally-trained chef who can whip up an order of Basque *piquillos* without red peppers (one of the staple ingredients) just because a guest feels allergic to them that night. Floating past the Clos de Vougeot was never as relaxing...

In short, this is the barge for people who (A) love their comfort and (B) love their food and wine (which tends to be

excellent and hyper-*terroir* in Burgundy). However, it’s best for people who also have a dash of artiness in their DNA. (Given the many requests we receive from LBF-readers for last-minute museum and opera info, we think this may be a match made-in-heaven.)

That’s why we’re delighted to relate that there’s a **special discount** on the Fandango this summer for **LBF readers only**. Contact Jill Jergel at Frontiers International Travel (P O box 959, Wexford, Pennsylvania 15090. Tel: 724-935-1577 or 800-245-1950; email: jjergel@frontierstravel.com) for details. Named one of the “125 Top Travel Specialists” by Condé Nast Traveler Magazine, she specializes in French canal barge cruises.



Hazel Young chats with guests

Future Paris

We’ll always have Paris... but not exactly as it looks now. President Sarkozy asked ten different architectural teams to come up with plans for “Grand Paris”... a French capital that’s ready for the 21st and 22nd centuries. The projects are on view at the *Cité de l’architecture et du patrimoine* in the Palais de Chaillot, 1 Place du Trocadéro, through November 22. All of them tackle the tricky problem of integrating the suburbs with the urban center. One proposal envisages a non-stop “City-by-the Seine” that stretches all the way to Le Havre.

On the transportation front, President Sarkozy announced a 35 billion euro plan on April 29th to extend the existing metro system by creating a 140-kilometer, underground ring road outside Paris city limits. The trains will resemble the fully-automated “Meteor” subways on the existing Number 14 line. When the project is completed in 2025, the new line will also connect Orly, central Paris and CDG airports.

In the meantime, there’s another measure underway that’s already making access to CDG easier. On April 22, the city began a three-month experiment with a bus/taxi-only corridor on five of the most congested kilometers between the airport and central Paris. This plan will operate from 7 to 10 am on weekdays and it’s predicted to shave ten minutes (and five euros) off the taxi-fare. If the project proves successful, an additional five kilometers will be added.

VAT Charges

On July 1, the value-added tax on food in French restaurants will be reduced from 19.6 % to 5.5 %, a move French restaurant owners have been pushing for fifteen years. This will definitely result in better, faster service as the tax reduction will allow owners to hire more staff. It also should result in lower prices. (Price reductions will not affect alcohol sales.)

Hello Moto!

Michelin has just published its first book specifically for the Harley crowd: *80 Virées à Moto 2009* (16€) details the most scenic motorcycle routes through France with practical advice on issues like loose gravel.

Coming in the Months Ahead: Cagnes-sur-Mer: La Locanderia. Saulieu: Bernard Loiseau. Arles: Le Cilantro, Jean-Luc Rabanel, L’Hôtel Particulier. Menton: Mirazur. Paris: Le Mesturet, Firmin le Barbier, Latin Quarter Hotels and much, much more...