



Faycal Amor showing Chrystelle through the new collection at Plein Sud in Rue du Dragon.



When in Paris

French-born Auckland-based Chrystelle Baran shares her favourite haunts in the City of Light

Chrystelle Baran knows Paris like the back of her hand. Although originally from Bordeaux, she has family in Paris and has fond memories of egg-hunting in her aunt's garden every Easter and visiting Versailles just around the corner. These days, she lives in Auckland with partner Nick Ferneyhough. Together, they are Baran de Bordeaux, Parnell-based French antiques importers. Their business entails regular buying trips to France and while they're based in their Bordeaux chateau, a trip to Paris is always essential. Here she reveals her top spots: "I usually prefer to stay in St-Germain-des-Pres on the Left Bank. The shops are smaller, and it's so nice to walk around. The 6th and 7th arrondissements are really like an exclusive village in middle of the metropolis.

A stone's throw from my hotel is Barbara Bui, Christian Louboutin, Ralph Lauren and Prada. Most of the stores tend to be pretty pricy, but you can be lucky. Last time I visited, there was a sale at the outrageous Walter Steiger shoe store and I picked up a pair for €100, down from €1000. Even the Zara store in the 7th is a cut above any other Zara I've been to.

My favourite label is Plein Sud, with 80 per cent of my wardrobe from there. I've recently come to know the designer Faycal Amor and a highlight of any Paris trip is for him to show me through the new season collections.

This is one of only two stores in France because Faycal has resisted the temptation to go mainstream. I love his simple, sexy forms and luxe draped fabrics.

There is also Le Carre des Antiquaires, a cluster of some of the world's most exquisite antique galleries. And of course any stay wouldn't be complete without a visit to the famous Cafe de Flore where we found ourselves sitting next to Saint-Germain local Karl Lagerfeld having his evening aperitif.

The 1st arrondissement is essential too. I love the Rue St Honore for the designer stores and Place Vendome with its sumptuous jewellers. But it's far more touristy and, for me, the wide boulevards and grand 19th century Haussmannian blocks lack the human scale and charm of the predominantly 16th and 17th-century Left Bank.

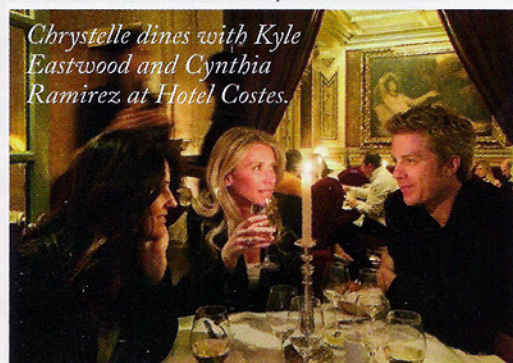
Galerics Lafayette is worth braving for the shoe department, but by mid-morning it's so overrun with tourists I have to get out. I usually have to escape to the haven of tranquillity of central Paris, Le Palais-Royal, a few blocks east. It's an exquisite example of 17th century neoclassical architecture and was once home to a young Louis XIV. Today the quiet central courtyard has cute little stores such as Stella McCartney and Marc Jacobs.

I always drop into Hotel Costes for drinks or dinner. It's here I meet jazz musician Kyle Eastwood – son of Clint – and his partner Cynthia Ramirez. It has been completely rebuilt and decorated by one of my favourite designers, Jacques Garcia. It's quintessential Paris, inspired by the heady late-19th century Belle Epoque with its rich velvets, tassels, chandeliers and pompous portraits.

But then there is a DJ playing early-80s Prince and that is the magic of Costes." ■

CHRYSTELLE'S MUST-VISIT LIST

- Plein Sud Jeanius
29 Rue du Dragon, 75006
- Ralph Lauren
173 Boulevard Saint-Germain, 75006
- Karl Lagerfeld
194 Boulevard Saint-Germain, 75007
- Barbara Bui
67 Rue des Saints-Peres, 75006
- Christian Louboutin
38-40 Rue de Grenelle, 75007
- Prada
5 Rue de Grenelle, 75007
- Walter Steiger
183 Boulevard Saint-Germain, 75006
- Cafe de Flore
172 Boulevard Saint-Germain, 75007
- Stella McCartney
114-121 Galerie de Valois, Palais-Royal, 75001
- Marc Jacobs
34 Rue de Montpensier, Palais-Royal, 75001
- Galeries Lafayette
40 Boulevard Haussmann, 75009
- Hotel Costes
239-241 Rue Saint Honore, 75001



Chrystelle dines with Kyle Eastwood and Cynthia Ramirez at Hotel Costes.