

## PARISIAN INTERLUDE

## At home in heart of French heritage

MICHAEL FERRANTE checks into a boutique hotel, and checks out the neighbourhood

I'm promised it will feel like I'm staying at a friend's home. Well, I've arrived at the boutique Hotel Esprit Saint Germain, on the Left Bank area of Paris. The hotel's black facade is distinctly Parisian, but discreet and welcoming.

And with only about 24 hours before I'm on the move again, the central location means I can still visit some great sights and check out this ritzy neighbourhood with time to spare.

After my arrival early afternoon I'm invited to sit in the cosy lounge — nicely decked with wall art, a book shelf and ornaments — and help myself to drinks while filling out my paperwork. The complimentary lounge bar, open at any time for guests, is stocked with a choice of spirits, wine, champagne and has a Nespresso coffee machine... a welcome start after a long flight and sleep deprivation.

I find it's a nice space to chill and do some work... and, of course, enjoy a nightcap. In fact, it's an adaptable room that also serves as the breakfast dining room.

At the opposite end on the ground floor there is another lounge that includes a fireplace and small refreshments bar — yes, I certainly am feeling "at home".

There is no full-service bar or restaurant on site, but manager Francois Souman says it's not an issue given their clientele's preference to eat out in the local area, which boasts many fine cafes and restaurants on bustling streets, and tucked away in laneways.

The hotel's level-five rooms and suites were refurbished last year and the remaining three floors will be completed by the end of February.

My refurbished Prestige

The stylish streets of Saint-Germain-des-Pres.  
Pictures: Michael Ferrante



Prestige Room with Terrace. Picture: Hôtel Esprit

Room with Terrace is the only one of its type in the hotel. It's spacious at 20sqm and that's not including the terrace balcony with a small table setting and rooftop views of the neighbourhood.

My room's elegant decor, with softly patterned walls, timber furniture and feature lighting on either side of the king bed, exudes a warm and homely feel. The room's exposed white-painted timber beams are remnants of the building's 18th century heritage, before it was converted to a hotel.

Breakfast is served in the lobby lounge with a continental spread of fresh pastries including croissants (I'd expect nothing less in France). There's also pancakes, fruits, a moist orange cake and a selection of cold-cut meats, salmon and cheeses.

## LOCATION, LOCATION

I love the freedom of being footloose and Saint-Germain-des-Pres is the perfect base for sightseeing,

shopping, dining... and indulging in some of those famous French pastries over coffee.

I lose count of the number of patisseries I find so it's a danger zone for calorie watchers!

There's plenty of high-end fashion and accessories boutiques, and a big market selling fresh produce, cheeses, gourmet food, meats and wine.

Close by, towards the river Seine along Boulevard St Michel, you'll find sidewalk bookstores and monuments, while the area is also renowned for antique stores, art galleries and the Musee d'Orsay.

Rows of push bikes are lined up streetside for hire and well-dressed folk zip by on motorised scooters.

The area is also within a short walk to the picturesque Jardin du Luxembourg (Luxembourg Gardens) — the backdrop to the stunning Palais du Luxembourg which houses the French Senate — and the Pantheon in the Latin Quarter.

## fact file

- Hotel Esprit Saint Germain
- 28 rooms: 2 Classic; 10 Superior; 9 Deluxe; 1 Prestige with private terrace; 1 Executive room; 4 Suites; 1 Penthouse Suite with private terrace.
- Six adjoining rooms for families of 4-6 people.
- Rates from \$550 per room, per night (seasonal promotions and packages available)
- Public transport: Close to Odeon station (line 4) and Mabillon station (line 10)
- [espritsaintgermain.com](http://espritsaintgermain.com)



Traiteur Patisserie, on Rue Lobineau.

I even pay a visit to the fire-ravaged Notre Dame cathedral on the Île de la Cité amid the Seine, only a 20-minute walk away.

So, after an adventurous day on foot I look forward one day coming "home" to warm hospitality in one of the cultural hubs... and one of my favourite parts of Paris.

Michael Ferrante was a guest of Hotel Esprit Saint Germain and Bicton Travel



Prestige Room terrace.