

ISLANDS & BEACHES EDITION



Restful elegance: (Clockwise from main) Acacia, a light-filled suite in a 17th century building on Ile Saint Louis; Ile Saint Louis; a quiet corner of Le Manoir des Labbes, Normandy; the pool at Le Manoir des Labbes; Acacia.

engravings and elegant candles, it's hard to know whether you're enjoying the view out or inside the most. When you can't take any more stylish Parisian vistas, there's a handily hidden state-of-the-art Sony flat screen masquerading as a mirror - plus "all mod cons" - Siemens

appliances, stove and small bar fridge - in the kitchen.

"We decided a long time ago we didn't want guests to feel uncomfortable about being in someone else's apartment with their things, so the furniture is mostly ours with no personal effects lying around," explains Pee. "It's like a well-decorated hotel room or apartment - you don't have the sense that you're in 'someone else's place'."

While most of the apartments feature traditional heritage Parisian decor, a few are done in contemporary style, including "Windows on the Seine" and "Eglantine", which has 360 degree views of the river.

Not five minutes down the road from Acacia, at 17 Rue Saint-Louis, Guest Apartment Services has a small office that doubles as the lobby and welcoming committee.

There's also 24-hour help in the form of an emergency/all hours mobile number that's provided to all guests. In each apartment is a local compendium with many recommendations, from the best bars within a two-kilometre radius to the fluffiest souffles; the creamiest of cheeses to the no-tourists allowed hidden gallery gem. It's like staying with your best friends without having to make chit chat with their kids, nor worry about a gift.

"It's very difficult even for us to

find properties to rent in these areas now," says Pee. "For example, Acacia is one of only three properties we have in Quai d'Orleans." One thing not in the compendium, but highly recommended, is Pee's impromptu tours. I catch him on a quiet day in the office with time to spare, and we're soon wandering past the building where Camille Claudel once lived on the smart Quai de Bourbon.

"At roughly €20,000 per square metre for real estate along the Seine, this is one of Paris's most expensive addresses," he says, adding that ideally, you want to stay on Quai de Bourbon or Quai d'Orleans.

We wander, enjoying the sights - romantic couples entwined on the sidewalk, slow pedalling cyclists, zippy Vespas, small dogs being dragged behind their well-dressed walkers, and the constant river traffic. In my line of work, it's not often I inquire why a hotel room is so reasonably priced. But at \$411, for Paris, Acacia is value for money.

Back in his office, Chastel laughs wearily: "I want people to have a good time. We have a 90 per cent occupancy rate almost year around, which helps me keep the prices down. Besides," he shrugs, "nice people bring me nice people. I want my guests to keep coming back and recommend us to their friends." **T**

TRIP NOTES

MORE INFORMATION
atout-france.fr

GETTING THERE

A range of airlines flies to Paris from Australian cities, including Emirates, Qantas and Etihad. See emirates.com, qantas.com, etihad.com

STAYING THERE

Guest Apartment Services has a range of apartments and studios

available, starting from €180. Most are on Ile Saint Louis and surrounding areas. See guestapartment.com

MOVIE SCENES SHOT THERE

In the 1963 film *Charade*, Audrey Hepburn and Cary Grant enjoy an ice-cream from Berthillon's. You can get one too, at 29-31 Rue Saint-

Louis en Ile. When Woody Allen shot *Midnight in Paris* (2011), he used Quai de Bourbon for the scene where the main character, screenwriter Gil Pender (played by Owen Wilson), is picked up by a classic old car to attend a swinging 1920s party where he meets Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald. OK, it's not exactly on the island - but you'll

love the very nearby Rue de la Bucherie, which features in a host of films - including the spot where Christian Thompson (Simon Baker) steals a kiss from Andy Sachs (Anne Hathaway) in *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006).

Fiona Carruthers was a guest of Guest Apartment Services.

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