



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ONE OF THE TASTIEST STREETS IN PARIS

BY STACIA FRIEDMAN PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROHAN VAN TWEST

Known by food-smart Parisians as *the* place to go for some of the best cheese, bread, pastries and other sundries in the city, Rue Cler in Paris' 7th *arrondissement* offers visitors a rare glimpse into French everyday life. On a recent visit to the city on the Seine, I chose to stay on Rue Cler because it would give me the opportunity to completely immerse myself into an ambience thick with all things quintessentially French. Within walking distance of the Eiffel Tower, Rue Cler graciously offered me a slice of Paris and a look into a world far off the tourist path.





dawn:



Trucks rumble over cobblestone streets, delivering farm-fresh fruits and vegetables to **Top Halles Produce** at the corner of Rue Cler and Rue de Grenelle. As awnings unfurl, grocers carefully display tiny French strawberries and fragrant tangerines as if they are jewels. Further down the street, at the *poissonerie*, shopkeepers artfully arrange gleaming eels, oysters and other succulent creatures of the deep on ice. Across the way, at the *fromagerie*, a canopied table is wheeled in front of the shop, loaded with farm-fresh cheeses. According to rumor, Paris' most elegant hostesses, including femme fatale Catherine Deneuve, come here to select perfect specimens from more than 400 cheese varieties. Meanwhile, housewives line up for fresh-from-the-oven baguettes at the corner *boulangerie*, while others perched on window seats sip espresso and nibble on flaky almond croissants while watching the day unfold.





Students from the American University of Paris and workers from nearby embassies walk briskly along the two-block, traffic-free rue *piéton* (pedestrian street), darting into *Café du Marché* for a quick espresso or to grab the newspaper *Le Monde* at a *tabac* stand. Now that the market is officially open, truck drivers reward themselves with their first drink of the day, a shot of whiskey with espresso, at *Bar PTT Brasserie*. A traditional Parisian brasserie with tables on the street, pinball machines and inexpensive fare like *tarte aux pommes* (apple tart), PTT is an ideal place to linger over a continental breakfast and scribble postcards—as long as you don't mind a visit from the owner's inquisitive poodle. *La Poste* (post office) is conveniently located next door.



morning:

noon:

At **Café Roussillon**, tables are starting to fill with office workers while the French version of yuppies meet at **Tarte Julie**, a minuscule storefront café featuring (what else?) a delectable variety of sweet and savory tarts, plus soup and salad. Those who would rather lunch at home or picnic at the Champ-de-Mars, a nearby park, purchase items *à porter* (to go) from an embarrassment of riches shown off in shop windows: tender roasted chicken at **Dorius Rotisserie**; sweet or savory crêpes made to order at **La Crêperie**; charcuterie, salads and deli food at the bustling **La Maison du Jambon** where Parma hams hang from the ceiling; sushi from the aptly named **Fast Asian Food**. Of course, lunch in Paris also means wine. **Le Repaire de Bacchus**, a small shop with a large selection of regional wines and beer, from inexpensive to rare, offers friendly service and a wine-of-the-month for just a few euros.





Young mothers pushing prams look in the window of **Droguerie Menage**, a classic kitchen-hardware store that sells everything from corkscrews to potholders. Even an armchair chef would be fascinated by the everyday utensils of the typical Parisian kitchen. Across the way, a clerk at **Oliviers & Co.** patiently explains to a customer the difference between various grades of olive oil. On their way home from the office, thoughtful (or guilty) husbands stop at **Fleurs** for a bouquet of roses and at **Jeff de Bruges** or **Le Lutin Gourmand** for handmade chocolates. Well-heeled matrons with immaculately coiffed hair linger over the counter at **Lenôte**, where the pastries are as dazzling—and almost as pricey—as fine gem stones.

afternoon:



evening:

At night, Rue Cler takes on an aura of romance. The cobblestones echo sounds of clicking high heels, music and the laughter of young professionals gathering for drinks or dinner at outdoor cafés. Couples stroll the narrow streets, reading menus posted at trendy little restaurants on Rue de Grenelle, between Rue Cler and Boulevard de la Tour Maubourg. For me, it's a delightful walk to the Seine and a ride on a *bateau-mouche* before saying *bonne nuit* to this savory market street.

The market is open Tuesday to Saturday 8:30 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. and again from 5:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.; Sunday, 8:30 A.M. to noon. Most shops are closed Monday. Metro: École Militaire.

