

HOUSE & GARDEN

Checking in: Villa-des-Prés is a stylish base for exploring Paris' Left Bank

This new hotel in Saint-Germain-des-Prés is deeply smart and comfortable, and the perfect place to stay as you explore the neighbourhood's many shops, galleries and restaurants



Saint-Germain-des-Prés is one of [Paris](#)' best-loved neighbourhoods for visitors, its enchanting streets filled with [art](#) galleries, antiques shops, pavement cafés and excellent restaurants. At the centre of it all, the new hotel Villa-des-Prés makes an ideal place to stay. A boutique hotel designed within the confines of a former apartment building, it offers a quintessentially Parisian experience: stylish, art-filled [interiors](#), sweeping views over the higgledy-piggledy rooftops, and a convenient location for the [city](#)'s finest sights and attractions.



Gaëlle Le Boulicaut

Paint the picture

As a visitor heading to Saint-Germain, you probably have a rather sophisticated itinerary planned: some browsing in the many beautiful interiors shops and galleries that populate the charming streets, perhaps a walk over the river to the Louvre, and some opulent dinners in the neighbourhood's wide variety of restaurants. For the stylish couples and solo travellers who might plan this kind of trip, Villa-des-Prés is everything you could want. The interiors are cool and scattered with art, so it feels like interiors reflect what is going on outside. It is a relatively small hotel, and while it has a bar and a breakfast area, there is no restaurant, so it assumes you'll be going out for dinner. On the other hand, there is a small and charming [spa](#) area, with a pool and sauna, and massages and other treatments on offer – perfect for winding down after a long day on the hoof. We can't think of many nicer places to spend a city break in the area.

Design notes



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The interior [architecture](#) and [decoration](#) of the rooms were done by Bruno Borrione, a designer long associated with Philippe Starck, who has created some very cool, retro public spaces, as well as airy yet colourful bedrooms that reference classic Parisian architecture while remaining very much of the moment. Shades of red and brown are a theme that run throughout, from the glossy paintwork of the bathrooms to the luxurious furniture of the bar downstairs. The art is a highlight, all specially commissioned from French artists for the hotel by Amélie du Chalard of nearby [Amélie Maison d'Art](#) (the gallery is well worth a visit in its own right). The hotel still feels a lot like what it used to be – an apartment building – and as you take up residence you feel you could be staying in a stylish Parisian's home. Unlike most real apartment buildings in this city, it has been extensively soundproofed and shockproofed so that you neither hear the traffic outside nor feel the vibrations of the Metro running underneath.



What's around

What's not around? Saint-Germain is a wonderfully central location, that has plenty to offer itself but is also within easy reach of the famous sights. The immediate neighbourhood is a brilliant place for [shopping](#). Walk ten minutes to Bon Marché for the best one-stop clothes shop in town, and find legendary pharmacy CityPharma just round the corner. The famous cafés once haunted by post-war intellectuals, Les Deux Magots and Café Flore, are both nearby, as well as a raft of galleries and antiques shops. Head for the river and you'll soon find yourself looking at Île de la Cité and the cathedral of Notre Dame, now under reconstruction, or go straight over the Pont des Arts to the Louvre and the Jardin des Tuileries. 45 minutes walking along the river (or a short Metro ride) will see you to the Eiffel Tower. Delightfully, Villa-des-Prés is about two minutes from a Metro station, so you will never want for transport.

Food and drink



The hotel itself offers cocktails in the evenings in the generous bar, plus an excellent breakfast in the morning, with a generous buffet of fruit and baked goods, plus some eggs and other hot food to order. Beyond that, you'll need to fend for yourself, but that's not exactly hard to do in a neighbourhood teeming with excellent restaurants. [Allard](#), a century-old traditional French bistro now run by Alain Ducasse, is a charming place to start. Its traditional wood-panelled exterior is seriously inviting, and within it serves French [country](#) classics such as escargots, frogs' legs and roast chicken in a pleasingly old-world atmosphere. For something completely different in the world of French celebrity chefs, try [Aux Pres](#) by Cyril Lignac, a more modern dining experience by a chef famous for his pastries. For the full *gastronomique* experience, try the tiny restaurant [Source](#), whose five and seven course tasting menus are well-priced and pack a serious punch, or head to [Boutary](#), a restaurant run by the eponymous caviar house, where you'll learn exactly how to taste caviar, amidst a raft of delicious and inventive courses.

Rooms and facilities



The hotel has 34 rooms and suites, including two beautiful and spacious penthouses on the top floor with balconies overlooking the city. Each room comes well-equipped with a luxurious [bathroom](#) (most have baths), an extensive mini-bar, and all the usual amenities. On the ground floor is the bar and breakfast area, which make pleasant places to sit and read a book or do some work during the day. The basement is given over to the spa, with a surprisingly generous 13m pool, a small gym, sauna and treatment rooms. It's amazing how much has been packed into the space, and hard to believe it was once an apartment building.

Prices at Villa-des-Prés start from from €599/night for a superior room (not including breakfast).