

Still point

Those seeking to create an oasis of calm in Paris's Saint Germain district face a difficult challenge: there's a chance that the Métro will run beneath it. "The buildings here are often shaky, so we raised the whole structure on a giant rubber pad," says architect Bruno Borrione as he shows MONOCLE around the new Villa-des-Prés in a former apartment building.

Appropriately, Borrione has designed every corner of the *hôtel particulier* to evoke the atmosphere of a Parisian home. Hidden behind a stunning post-Haussmann-style façade (and new soundproof windows), the 34 guest rooms and

suites are well stocked with books; their walls are decorated with Parisian moldings and painted in a classical style. Meanwhile, the hotel's interior spiral staircase is lined with stained-glass windows.

Unlike other recent openings, Villa-des-Prés wasn't designed as a neighbourhood hub. Though the zinc-topped bar is open to all, it feels more like a toned-down speakeasy. "Our main objective is to offer guests a good night's sleep in the heart of the district's hustle and bustle," says GM Jérôme Didier. "As you can see, we really mean it."

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