



Revolutionary spirit

Place de la Bastille is the gateway to the 11th arrondissement – a trendy area well known for its nightlife and eclectic range of shops, says **Alison Weeks**

Although major tourist attractions are few and far between in this part of Paris, you will find a more authentic side of the city, with locals outnumbering tourists. For a good night out, look no further than the Oberkampf district, a perennial favourite with its edgy bars and hip cafés. Anyone preferring a slower pace should head into the quiet back streets near Place de la Bastille and along Rue du Faubourg Saint-Antoine to seek out authentic bistros and restaurants. During the day, the 11th is a shopper's paradise, offering a range of retail opportunities.

Foodies have plenty to savour at the Marché Bastille and Marché Popincourt, both on Boulevard Richard-Lenoir, which have a wonderful selection of fresh produce and flowers. The former is open on Sundays and Thursdays and the latter on Tuesdays and Fridays.

In recent years the 11th has gained a reputation for its stylish boutiques and second-hand shops. If you are interested in vintage goods, head to the Brocantes de Popincourt, one of the area's hidden gems and a cheaper alternative to more famous Parisian flea markets. On Rue Ternaux, Rue du Marché Popincourt and Rue Neuve Popincourt, there is a plethora of shops, selling everything from retro fashions and mid-20th-century furnishings to older collectables and antiques.

The 11th is known for its fine theatres including the Bataclan, a café-concert and popular music venue built in the 1860s, and the world-famous Cirque d'hiver Bouglione. Opened in 1852, it is the oldest circus building in the world still in use. The 11th is also home to the Musée d'Édith Piaf, surprisingly the only museum dedicated to France's iconic singer, who died 50 years ago. This little-known attraction is in a private apartment on Rue Crespin-du-Gast and has many of Piaf's letters, personal belongings and dresses. Visits are by appointment only, on selected days of the week. (See our feature on page 56 to read how Piaf has inspired modern singers).

The nearby Rue Pache is home to another eccentric museum, devoted to the history of smoking. Exhibits include 17th-century pipes, antique snuffboxes and tools used to cultivate tobacco on the plantations. There is also a gift shop and bookstore, where visitors can find more information on the subject as well as souvenir lighters and smoking accessories.

CLOCKWISE FROM FACING PAGE: The Colonne de Juillet in Place de la Bastille; Second-hand shops line the area's narrow streets; The ornate exterior of the Cirque d'hiver Bouglione; A fruit and vegetable stall at the Marché de Bastille

11th arrondissement

Although slightly off the tourist track, the 11th arrondissement boasts some of the trendiest spots in Paris, from funky hangouts to Belle Époque cafés. The most densely populated part of the city, it offers an eclectic mix of traditional Parisian style and avant-garde flair, with less expensive prices than in more mainstream parts of the capital. There are two well-known districts: Oberkampf, which is known for its lively nightlife, and Bastille, another fashionable neighbourhood named after the 11th's most famous monument – the prison which once stood at its south-western edge.

HISTORY

Originally outside the medieval city walls, this eastern area of Paris has played a role in many of the city's historic uprisings, including the Battle of Faubourg

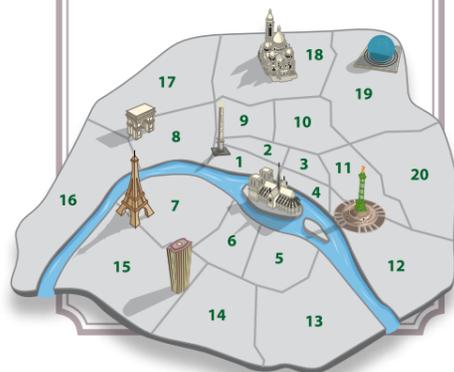
Saint-Antoine in 1652 during the Fronde rebellion and, most notably, the storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789. The infamous prison had been built as a fortress in the 14th century to ward off attacks from the English during the Hundred Years' War, and was later turned into a state prison. After the building was demolished in the aftermath of the French Revolution, the Bastille became an important symbol for republicans in France, especially during the July Revolution of 1830. More recently, the site has been the setting for political and social demonstrations.

WHAT TO SEE

An outline of the prison is marked out on the pavements and roads of Place de la Bastille, which straddles the 11th, 4th and 12th arrondissements. The square is dominated by the Colonne de Juillet, commemorating the 'trois glorieuses' – 'three glorious days' that led to the fall of Charles X during the July Revolution.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ARNAUD CHICUREL/HEMIS.FR; AMÉLIE DUPONT/OT PARIS; IAIN MASTERTON/ALAMY; MARC VERHILLE/OT PARIS

Paris arrondissements
The French capital is divided into 20 administrative districts known as arrondissements. They are arranged in a clockwise spiral spreading out from the first in the centre of the city. Each arrondissement has a character of its own, with cafés, restaurants, shops and tourist attractions unique to the area. Let our guide to the best of each district help you enjoy your next visit.



WHERE TO EAT

Café de l'Industrie

16-17 Rue Saint-Sabin
75011 Paris

Tel: (Fr) 1 47 00 13 53

A local institution, this historic café is so popular that it has spread into an annexe across the street. Meals from €11.

Le Chateaubriand

129 Avenue Parmentier
75011 Paris

Tel: (Fr) 1 43 57 45 95

www.lechateaubriand.net

Acclaimed Basque chef Inaki Aizpitarte serves up affordable haute cuisine in this trendy, new-look bistro – no 18 in the world's 50 best restaurants for 2013. Tasting menu €70.

Le Café Charbon

109 Rue Oberkampf
75011 Paris

Tel: (Fr) 1 43 57 55 13

Belle Époque dance hall-cum-café that is one of the area's timeless hotspots.

WHERE TO STAY

B&B Guénot

4 Passage Guénot
75011 Paris

Tel: (Fr) 1 42 74 23 84

www.bb-guenot.com

Chambre d'hôte de charme looking on to a quiet garden courtyard. One double, €120.

Crowne Plaza Paris-République

10 Place de la République
75011 Paris

Tel (Fr) 1 43 14 43 50

www.ihg.com

Recently renovated four-star hotel in a prime position. Doubles from €141.

Grand Hôtel Français

223 Boulevard Voltaire
75011 Paris

Tel: (Fr) 1 43 71 27 57

www.grand-hotel-francais.fr

Small hotel in an elegant old building. Doubles from €119.

GETTING AROUND

The 11th is well served by the métro with the Bastille, République and Nation stations all on major intersections between lines. From Paris Gare du Nord, take line 5 into the heart of the arrondissement.