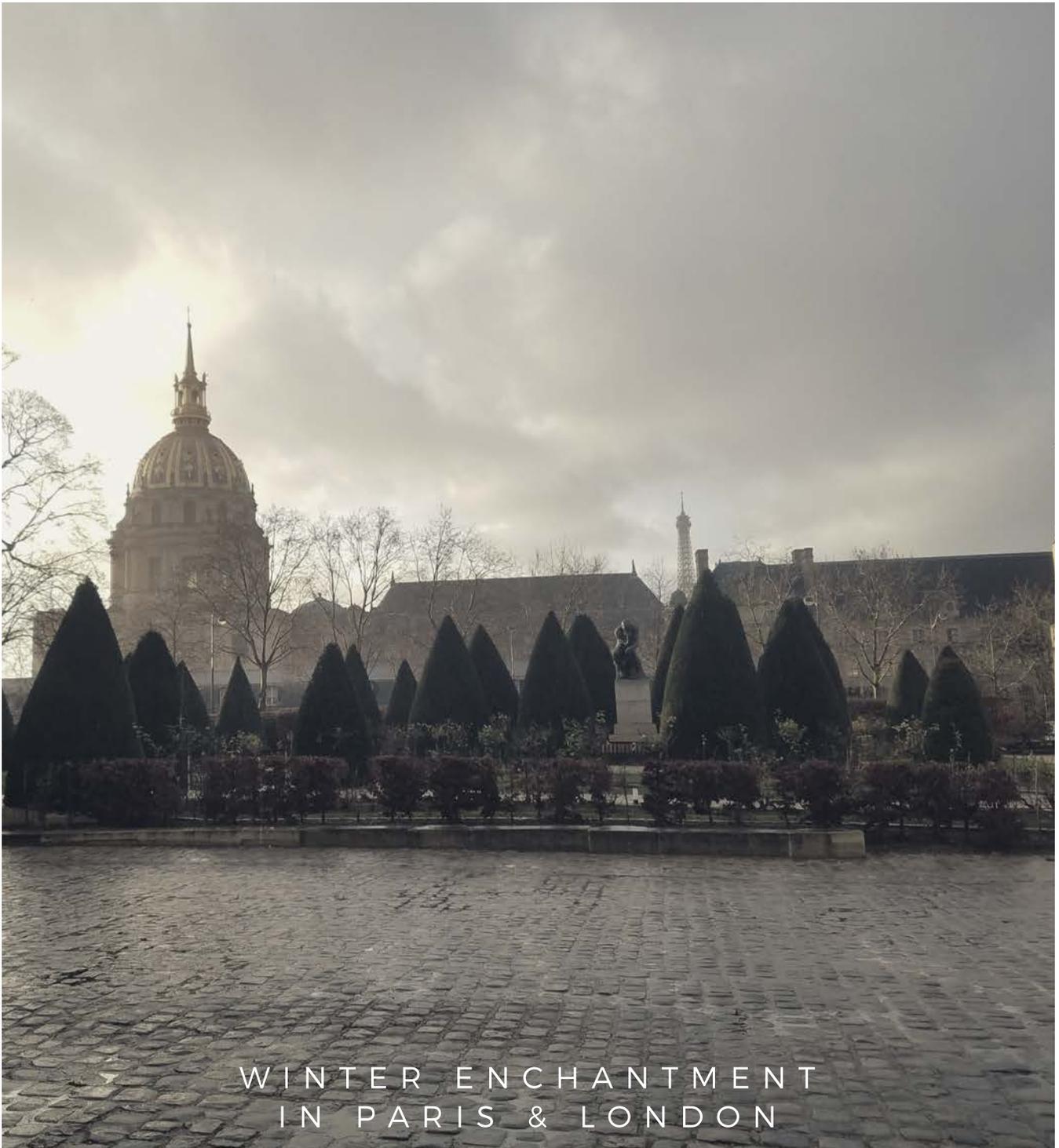


CURATED EXPERIENCES

PASSAGES OF DISTINCTION NEWSLETTER - 2018



WINTER ENCHANTMENT
IN PARIS & LONDON



FINDING THE WARMTH THIS WINTER

PARIS & LONDON

By Joe Decker

This year, I made my first visit to Paris with my wife. Working in the travel industry for the better part of ten years, representing a fantastic collection of Hotels in the city, I thought it was about time I experience one of the most beloved and iconic places in the world.

Arriving in France, as part of our welcome, **Deluxe Drivers** arranged a meet and greet for us. Jet lagged, and it being my first time, it was wonderful to just have to worry about getting through customs, and having my suitcase waiting for me. The rest would be handled by Allen. On our way to our hotel, our driver guide rode the line perfectly between sharing facts about what we passed, yet respecting how tired we were. As we approached our final destination, he made sure to circle around so that we would see the Eiffel Tower for the first time directly in front of us, shining in the first hours of daylight.

I must admit I was a bit weary of traveling to Paris at this time, as I was afraid I was going to miss out on so much of the natural beauty. However, what I was greeted with was a sense of calm. Don't get me wrong, the city was still full of life and tourists, but I instantly felt a kind of peacefulness and a cozy, kind of warmth that only winter can bring.

Ideally, I enjoy exploring on foot as much as I can. It allows me to truly experience everything from landmarks to the out of the way gems - like a whiskey bar in the 2nd Arrondissement that felt like it was hollowed directly into the rock, or a quaint French restaurant just blocks away from the Plaza Tour Eiffel, that instantly gives you the feeling like you are in on a local "secret".

For my entire time with Passages of Distinction, I have worked closely with Séverine at the **Les Grands Hotels Parisiens**, three hotels, each in a different style fitting their location in Paris. With **Hotel Powers** currently under renovation, and being re-imagined as a 5-Star hotel, I was only able to experience **Plaza Tour Eiffel** and **Grand Hotel du Palais Royal**. Plaza Tour Eiffel, is a charming 4-star right off the Trocadero in a quiet residential area. In the mornings, we would stand on our balcony and look out onto the Eiffel Tower. The 5-star Grand Hotel is located in the vicinity of the Palais Royal, surrounded by classical architecture, delectable cuisine, and luxury boutiques. After a long day fighting crowds to glimpse the Mona Lisa at the Louvre, my wife and I retreated the short walk to the Hotel. The moment we entered the ultra-refined lobby with its soothing light-colored wood, our weariness from the world's most famous museum washed away.

It felt like we stepped into our own private mansion. The luxury rooms and suites, all designed by Pierre Yves-Rochon are carefully crafted to provide guests with an elegant, warm atmosphere. The Lounge Bar is an ideal place to unwind after a day of exploring the city, we sipped on delicious cocktails that we felt were created just for us. The service is warm and personable. Le Lulli serves guests delectable seasonal cuisine in a winter garden. **Grand Hotel du Palais Royal** has its own exclusive spa, with a large Turkish bath and top of the line fitness area for guests desiring a wellness retreat during their stay.





After a few museum filled days, we decided to venture out of the city. Of course, I looked to **Deluxe Drivers**, leaving the planning in their capable hands.

Promptly at 7am, we were greeted at our hotel by a sleek Mercedes and to our pleasant surprise, a warm welcome from Allen, our driver from our first day. Throughout the short drive to Versailles, Allen filled the time with historical facts, and interesting tidbits about the area. Before dropping us off at the private side entrance, Allen made sure that our first impression of the Sun King's Palace was memorable! He steered us down the main street where suddenly the golden gates filled the car window, seemingly on fire! It is a sight I will never forget. After escorting us to the start of the line, ensuring we were completely comfortable, Allen bid us adieu, but ensuring us that he would not be far. After spending the morning admiring this beacon of opulence, and taking a lovely stroll through a short section of the winter touched gardens, we were met by our driver to be guided through to the other sections of the Palace grounds, before heading back to Paris. When we returned, my wife said that she always loved Versailles but hated how troubling it is getting there through public means. Having a personal driver guide made all the difference, there was no travel stress. All we had to do is sit back and enjoy.

Our journey to the City of Lights was over. It was truly magnificent getaway, and I feel now more than ever what draws people to this destination over and over again.

Before we could return home from our week abroad, we had a 22 hour layover in one of our favorite cities, London. Having less than a day we had to really maximize our time, but with us staying at the **St. James's Hotel & Club**, the whole city was conveniently just around the corner.

Tucked away on a quiet cul-de-sac near prestigious Mayfair, and on the doorstep of Green Park and Buckingham Palace, the Hotel has been catering to London's elite since the 1850's.

We arrived late that evening, and were looking forward to unwinding after our day of traveling. Pulling up to the Hotel, it was hard to believe we were in the heart of London. The **St. James's** just exudes a sense of peace. After being escorted to our spacious, and exquisitely decorated suite, I was instantly drawn into the beautiful soft tones of the decor. It felt like the perfect place to getaway.

Having not eaten and anticipating the food of William Drabble, we partook in some room service. The entire dining concept is overseen by the Michelin-star chef, and it shows! We ordered what turned out to be one of the best sandwiches I have ever tasted! A nightcap at the bar was the final stop for the evening. We chose a quiet, cozy corner in the bar, complete with a stylish bench seating and beautiful windows overlooking the quiet street. On our way back to our room, my wife was enchanted by the beautiful staircase that winds through the core of the Hotel, and is adorned with a magnificent chandelier.

In typical London fashion, we awoke to the sounds of rain on the window. Before venturing out, I was able to plan our route on the in-room complimentary smartphone. Being able to book tickets to the nearby Churchill War Rooms, and search for nearby restaurants all without having to worry about if you are using your precious international data. Best part is you can take the phone with you! Before we even reached the door, we were helped by the friendly staff, having our airport transfers arranged, luggage stored, and an umbrella handed to us. Within minutes we left our private home and were in the bustling city.

Sadly, our time passed all too quickly and before we knew it we were off to the airport planning our next trip to the **St. James's** and to make sure we leave enough time to experience **Seven Park Place**.



NEWS FROM OUR COLLECTION

GRAND HOTEL PRINCIPE DI PIEMONTE
HOTEL SACHER VIENNA
SHORE CLUB ON LONG BAY BEACH

Grand Hotel Principe di Piemonte Joins the Collection

We are reflecting on a bygone age of refinement, where intellectuals, royals, and artists alike called the iconic **Grand Hotel Principe di Piemonte** in Viareggio home. A historic hotel that first opened in the early 1920's and nestled on the Mediterranean, only 10 minutes from the famed Cinque Terre, and hour from Florence. Behind the magnificent facade, blends luxury, class and elegance to provide experiences that are always new and surprising.

The sister hotel to Florence's **Hotel Brunelleschi**, Principe di Piemonte recently went through a complete and careful renovation that has brought the hotel back to its former glory. Guests will be charmed by the elegance of the past whilst still benefiting from modern comforts.

Overseeing the management is General Manager of the Year Claudio Catani of the Hotel Brunelleschi, the Principe di Piemonte has embraced his dedication to providing the best service and experience possible for their guests.



New Luxury Villas Open on the Shores of Long Bay Beach



After a successful first year, the **Shore Club on Long Bay Beach** have unveiled three stunning Villas. These standalone estates offer unparalleled views over Long Bay's vibrant turquoise water and endless skies.

Each of the 8,800 sq.ft. villas will offer total privacy in a relaxed atmosphere of a curated Caribbean experience, while a personal concierge is on-hand for every request. With six-bedrooms, five in the main house and one detached, each villa boasts its own heated pool, private courtyard, expansive terraces, spacious guest rooms with large baths and a master suite with the most enchanting ocean views imaginable.

Unsurpassed Luxury in Hotel Sacher's Bel Etage Suites

The **Hotel Sacher Vienna** has seven brand new suites. During the renovation of the Bel Etage exquisite parts of the historical interior were rediscovered and elaborately restored, bringing historical Vienna to life yet with all of the amenities of modern comfort and convenience. Puccini Suite, La Bohème Suite, Tosca Suite, Manon Lescaut Suite, Arabella Suite, La Belle Hélène Suite and Vienna Philharmonic Suite: The new suites on the Bel Etage of the 5-star superior Hotel Sacher are dedicated to the world of opera.

Alexandra Winkler, a member of the owner family, explains: *“Our hotel and the opera are inextricably intertwined. The names of our new suites express our reverence for the world of opera and its artists, which delight and enthrall our guests daily.”*

