



## Le Royal Monceau Raffles Paris

Slipping a glass of Montrachet in Le Bar Long at Le Royal Monceau Raffles Paris, I contemplate the romance of the City of Light when the hotel first opened in 1928 at 37 Avenue Hoche and its enormous bar attracted the creative luminaries of the day, who included the likes of Josephine Baker and Ernest Hemingway.

The landmark property reopened as a Raffles entity in October 2010 after a lavish three-year transformation directed by Parisian design maestro Philippe Starck. In the bar and throughout the hotel's public spaces as well as its 85 rooms, 61 suites and three presidential suites, Starck indulges a more-is-more instinct with art as the unifying theme. Books, photographs, paintings, sketches, objets d'art and curios fill every nook and shelf conjuring a contemporary incarnation of Gertrude Stein's famed salon.

As curator, Hervé Mikaeloff cultivates the artistic culture of the hotel—from recommending acquisitions and commissions to overseeing the property's artistic experience. One of his goals was to establish the hotel as a local art destination with a bookstore offering more than 700 art and design titles, a 99-seat cinema and an exhibition gallery. The city's only art concierge, Domoina des Brantes, helps plan personalized art and culture experiences.

Stéphane Calais's ceiling fresco "Le jardin de Paris" crowns La Cuisine, the main dining venue. A wall lined with backlit bottles of wine forms a colorful backdrop for the inviting space featuring an open kitchen and

a shared table under a collection of Starck's trademark chandeliers.

The modern culinary approach of Executive Chef Laurent André eschews fussiness. "People don't want to eat for three to four hours today," he explains. At La Cuisine and the intimate Italian restaurant, Il Carpaccio, a top priority is to use seasonal produce at the height of flavor and uncomplicated recipes. "In Paris there are often too many things on the plate, and the taste gets lost."

A nightcap affords the perfect opportunity for people watching. In the bar, Starck positioned a long, high table, at which patrons may face each other. It runs perpendicular to the altar-like staging area where the bartenders mix cocktails.

Adjacent to the bar, La Fumée Rouge is a well-ventilated smoking sanctuary, bathed in red from ceiling to floor with a red chandelier as a centerpiece. Private storage is available for regular patrons and the hotel offers such classic Cubans as Cohiba and Montecristo to pair with a special cognac. A more spacious, members-only smoking club is expected to open this spring. Starck designed the new cigar bar to evoke the spirit of traditional English clubs, but with a more au courant vibe. Still, the sensual, scarlet-tinted La Fumée Rouge seems more apropos for bohemian types when the clock strikes midnight in Paris.

Visit [www.leroyalmonceau.com](http://www.leroyalmonceau.com) or call 33 1 42 99 88 00.

—Laurie Kahle