

MADE IN FRANCE

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France then, now and in the future

Rich in history and tradition, France offers record numbers of visitors a mix of old and new with high-tech attractions and futuristic architecture

Overview
CAROLYN BOYD

It's the most visited country in the world, offering vibrant cities and charming villages with everything from camping holidays to the most prestigious hotels, so it is little wonder the number of visitors to France continues to grow.

Last year 84.5 million people visited, up 0.9 per cent on 2014. Although recent figures have seen a dip following November's terrorist attacks, the French government is aiming at 100 million visitors in 2020.

But what do visitors find in the land that for many stirs memories of childhood holidays, and conjures up images of bikes, baguettes and berets? Of course the classic elements of *la vie française* will feature heavily in any trip across the channel.

However, between the coffees in pavement cafés, pre-breakfast trips to the boulangerie and strolls around the local markets, visitors will find high-tech museums and jaw-dropping architecture, along with segway and electric bike tours, and accommodation that ranges from the super-chic B&B to the downright quirky glamping options.

The most recent innovation is Bordeaux's Cité du Vin, which opened on June 1. This €81-million project is housed in a ten-storey glass structure designed to evoke the swirl of wine poured into a glass. Inside, visitors can trace the history and culture of wine throughout the world, told through

such high-tech displays as holographic wine experts. They can also stand out on a 35-metre-high observation deck to admire the rooftops of Bordeaux and the vineyards beyond.

The Cité du Vin comes just 18 months after the city of Lyons' own architectural masterpiece, the Musée des Confluences, a 33-metre stainless steel and glass edifice that wouldn't look out of place in *Star Wars*. It tells the story of humankind through more than two million objects divided into vibrant and engaging displays.

When it comes to France's newest attractions, stunning architecture is a recurring theme and two of Paris' newest cultural institutions are housed in similarly striking buildings. The Fondation Louis Vuitton opened in western Paris, in the Bois de Boulogne, in October 2014. Its 12 glass "sails", designed by world-renowned architect Frank Gehry, are every bit as impressive, if not more so, as the exhibits inside.

Meanwhile, in a north-east suburb of the capital, the new Philharmonie de Paris concert hall was designed by visionary French architect Jean Nouvel. Its state-of-the-art acoustics, along with an awe-inspiring auditorium, opened in January 2015, and it has been wowing audiences of its symphony orchestra, jazz and world music concerts since.



Source: Allianz 2016

Paris will see yet more innovative architecture in the coming years thanks to mayor Anne Hidalgo's Reinventing Paris scheme, which features 23 projects across the city to transform disused or dilapidated buildings into modern and environmentally friendly living and business spaces.

Elsewhere, plans are afoot for a Cité Internationale de la Gastronomie to be developed within the Grand Hotel-Dieu in Lyon, which will offer food and wine shops, restaurants, and spaces dedicated to exhibitions, cookery courses and demonstrations. This former hospital, and one of the city's most iconic buildings, will also comprise a luxury hotel, apartments, gardens and courtyards.

In Burgundy at Dijon, a similar project involves the development of a huge cultural centre, offering a Cité du Gastronomie et du Vin as well as a heritage centre, luxury hotel and cinema complex, by the end of 2018.

It isn't only visitor attractions that are enjoying a new era, the way in which visitors do their sightseeing is changing, too. Nearly a decade after the bike-sharing scheme Vélib' launched in Paris and became the coolest way to zip around the City of Light, the electric bike has found a place in bike hire centres throughout France, both in towns and rural areas.

Similarly, many places now offer tours on a segway, or gyropod as they call it in France, which give visitors a novel (albeit lazy) ride through forest tracks or rural footpaths, proving that technology doesn't just stop at the big-budget city museums and is allowing visitors to see the countryside in different ways.

Even without a segway or electric bike, part of the charm of visiting France has always been the chance to get away from it all, to lose yourself in its pretty villages, eat at local bistros and stay in a rustic gîte – and that hasn't changed. While the campsites and gîtes still offer affordable accommodation options, when it comes to glamping, the spirit of innovation has touched even the most rural corners of the country.

In a bid to offer something fun for a family holiday or an unusual stop-over, campsite owners and farmers are embracing the notion of *hébergement insolites* or quirky accommodation. As a result, tree-houses, yurts and gypsy roulottes are now de rigueur, and so too are the more unusual forms of accommodation, such as star-gazing cabins, and even, in the depths of rural Burgundy, an ecolodge built in the shape of a cow.

Those in search of more luxury, meanwhile, can take comfort in the fact that many hoteliers are ditching the chintz to offer stylishly decorated retreats. In many places, too, even the once-humble B&B has had a makeover to rival the smartest hotels in La Belle France.



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The spirit of France is more than its wine

As one of the world's leading producers of wine, it's easy to forget that beyond its thousands of vineyards, France has a booming sector in other alcoholic drinks

DRINKS INDUSTRY
CAROLYN BOYD

Whether its spirits, vermouths, liqueurs or fortified wines, the French drinks cabinet is brimming with all manner of wonderful concoctions and each tells the story of a particular region or époque.

Made to drink on its own or in a cocktail, many of the brands that are now a staple of the world's cocktail bars have been part of a growth in the value of the French spirits industry, with an increase in value of 13.2 per cent to €3.7 billion (£2.8 billion) compared with 2012.

While wine has been a staple on dining tables across France for centuries, the story of many of its other drinks has been a more interesting journey. Time-worn adverts for Dubonnet, Lillet or Suze painted on the side of buildings as you drive through France, are a nod to the early years of the aperitif.

These fortified wines were originally developed as anti-malarial tonics for soldiers in the French foreign legion in the late 19th-century, which began a fashion for health tonics among the general public. This, in turn, paved the way for aperitifs to be drunk before meals to aid appetite and digestion.

The custom of enjoying an aperitif spawned many different drinks including vermouths, such as Noilly Prat, and bi-products of other drinks, such as pineau de charentes (from cognac, in Poitou-Charentes) and pommeau (from calvados, made in Normandy), but perhaps the most widely known pre-dinner drink in France is a kir.

This simple cocktail of crème de cassis and white wine, usually aligoté or chardonnay, was made famous by post-war mayor of Dijon Felix Kir and is poured in homes and local restaurants across France. There are more than a dozen producers of crème de cassis in Burgundy, the largest being Le-

jay-Lagoutte in Dijon, which also produces other fruit liqueurs.

While a kir is undoubtedly popular, especially among the older generation, Lejay-Lagoutte's biggest market is a surprising contrast. The company sells four million bottles of fruit liqueurs, more than three quarters of which is crème de cassis, to Japan each year. Managing director Olivier Melis explains: "Crème de cassis is very popular among young Japanese women, who drink it mixed with soda water, sparkling water or in tea. One product that is very in vogue is the Lejay Fruit Jar, which is a mix of Lejay cassis and fresh fruit juice."

Another producer, who is also giving crème de cassis a new sophisticated image around the world, is Mickael Antolin, a young entrepreneur who has created an eponymous artisanal brand intended for the luxury market. Mr Antolin spent several years as a basketball scholar at college in California, but when injury prevented him pursuing the game professionally, the Dijon-born student turned to developing a business based around

the product that is synonymous with his home town.

"Cassis is something that never grew in the US, neither the image of it, nor the way we use it. We've never done cassis in a different way," he says. "So that's why I've been working hard to create and promote this high-end product."

His hard work is paying off as his brand of cassis, which has hints of vanilla and violet, is being served at formal dinners at the Palace of Monaco and is being stocked in the bars of luxury Paris hotels, such as The Peninsula and The Royal Monceau. In California, meanwhile, a number of A-list bars and restaurants, such as Spago and Vice-roy L'Ermitage in Beverley Hills, and Melisse in Santa Monica, are stocking the cassis. His next step, he says, is to find a British importer to bring it to the cocktail bars of London.

Another brand that has been a staple in the French drinks cabinet



for over a century is Bénédictine. This historic liqueur is a blend of 27 different plants and spices, including cloves and juniper, and is best known for its part in such cocktails as the Singapore Sling, Bobby Burns, and Milk and Honey.

The unique drink dates from long before mixologists were reaching for the famous brown bottle with its wax seal. Bénédictine began its story as a herbal elixir developed by 16th-century monks in Normandy. The recipe was lost during the French Revolution and, in 1863, wine merchant and art collector Alexandre Le Grand rediscovered the recipe among his collection of antique books. He then set about re-

constructing the drink, which was and is still enjoyed as a digestif. The drink became so successful that Mr Le Grand built the extraordinary Palais Bénédictine at Fecamp in Normandy, where the drink is still made today.

Being a drink of Normandy provenance made it popular among the soldiers of the First World War and a curious legacy of this is that the drink is a working men's club in Burnley, Lancashire, where regulars get through some 1,000 bottles a year. Many of the members' ancestors were drafted into the East Lancashire Regiment, which was posted to Normandy during the war,



€3.7bn

French spirits industry in 2016

Source: Fédération des Exportateurs de Vins & Spiritueux de France

Getty Images

01
City of Cognac, famous for one of the world's best-known types of brandy or eau de vie

02
Barrels at the Remy Martin distillery in Cognac

03
Vintage wall advertisement in Rennes for French wine-based aperitif Dubonnet

04
Rare poster for Absinthe Blanqui in a quintessential Art Nouveau-style, designed and printed by Revon



as Bénédictine's brand ambassador Ludovic Miazga explains: "Back then it was drunk as a 'bene and hot', Bénédictine and hot water, sipped during the cold winter nights."

The bar of the Burnley Miners Social Club has even given it a new appeal to younger members of the club by creating a "bene-bomb", their own version of a Jagerbomb, by mixing it with an energy drink.

Like many French spirits and liqueurs, Bénédictine found its fans in late 19th-century prohibition-era New York and continues to be a favourite among mixologists. Mr Miazga says: "In the last 50 World Best Bars awards, almost 99 per cent of the establishments have our bottle on their back bars and are using it to create the classics, but also contemporary cocktail creations."

A French drink that has a more infamous legacy is absinthe, which was known as The Green Fairy on account of the wisp of green smoke that results from water being dripped through a sugar cube on a percolated spoon and on to the liquid. As the favoured tipple of late-19th-century and early-20th-century Paris artists and writers, including Vincent van Gogh, Henri de Toulouse Lautrec, Oscar Wilde and Ernest Hemingway, imbibed it in their dozens.

It was thought that the chemical thujone, found in the wormwood used in its production, had hallucinogenic effects and, as a result of the violence it was said to invoke, it was banned in France in 1915. From then it languished in the world's

FIVE TOP DISTILLERIES TO VISIT

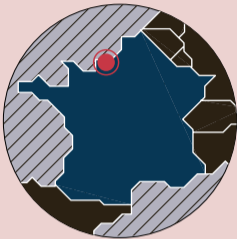
01 CARRÉ COINTREAU
LOIRE

Found in its hometown of Angers, in the western Loire region, the Cointreau distillery is an exciting visit for lovers of the orange liqueur. Visitors can trace the production process of the drink that dates from 1849 and see the striking copper stills. The gallery gives a vibrant display of the history of the brand, before leading you to a colourful bar to sample a Cointreau cocktail.



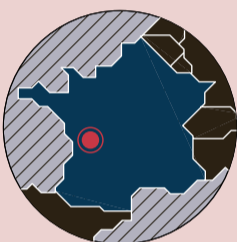
02 PALAIS BÉNÉDICTINE
NORMANDY

Set in the 19th-century Palais Bénédictine in Fecamp, Normandy, the Bénédictine museum and distillery tells the story of how, in 1863, wine merchant and art collector Alexandre Le Grand found the 16th-century recipe in an antique book. Visitors have a guided tour of the museum and gallery before a cocktail in the conservatory. The distillery also offers cocktail-making classes and tasting workshops.



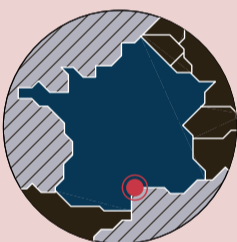
03 CHÂTEAU COURVOISIER
AQUITAINE-LIMOUSIN-POITOU-CHARENTES

Cognac is one of France's most revered products and its home town in the western region of Poitou-Charentes is where to find the most famous distilleries. Among them is the Château Courvoisier, which offers visitors a classic tour that introduces the brand, how it is made and a tasting, or a more sophisticated day-long course that gives visitors the chance to follow the product from vineyard to table.



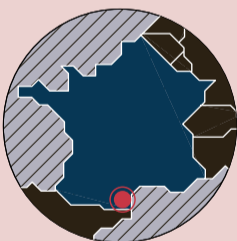
04 LA MAISON NOILLY PRAT
LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON-MIDI-PYRÉNÉES

This dry vermouth, which is best known for its part in a Martini, hails from the small town of Marseillan in the south of France, where visitors can trace its origins at the Maison Noilly Prat. The museum and distillery guides you through its history and how the brand's reputation was developed by Anne-Rosine Prat after her father Louis Noilly and husband Claudius Prat both died.



05 LES CAVES BYRRH
LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON-MIDI-PYRÉNÉES

The time-honoured aperitif Byrrh (pronounced beer) is made with red wine, mistelle and quinine, along with flavours such as coffee, cinnamon, cocoa and orange rind. It was launched in 1873 and is still made at the original distillery, partly designed by Gustave Eiffel, in Thuir, south-west France, where you can see the largest oak vat in the world, with a capacity of 1,000,200 litres.



collective memory as the substance that sent Van Gogh mad, with a dangerously high 80 per cent proof. In 2001, however, EU scientists re-examined thujone and discovered that the levels contained in absinthe were lower than accepted levels for consumption, and the drink was exonerated. Despite the findings, the ban on selling a drink named absinthe remained until 2011, which gave rise to a number of drinks that were labelled "drinks made with absinthe plants". One of these drinks is Absente, which is produced at the Distilleries et Domaines de Provence in Forcalquier, and plays on the history of the infamous spirit in their advertising campaigns, depicting in their paintings, among others, a

delirious Van Gogh. While the word absinthe still cannot be used as a label, The Green Fairy has returned to the back shelf of bars around the world, where it is used to rinse out the glass and thus add flavour to such cocktails as the Sazerac and Corpse Reviver #2. As absinthe and other French drinks find themselves the go-to ingredients for bartenders as they develop evermore original concoctions, you can be sure the next time you sip a cocktail, the spirits, vermouths and liqueurs will bring you a taste of French history and regional identity.

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COMMERCIAL FEATURE



THE SPIRIT OF PARIS

One fine cognac captures the spectacle, splendour and sophistication of France



Award-winning cognac Courvoisier® has been the spirit of choice in toasting celebratory moments in history for more than 200 years. Courvoisier's legacy began when it was founded by two entrepreneurial visionaries in the 1800s, reaching its initial peak when it was celebrated during the French capital's most exuberant of times – the Belle Époque. Take the year 1889, when Paris welcomed the world to the Exposition Universelle, one of France's greatest-ever celebrations, the pivotal moment of Paris's golden age when the eyes of the world descended on the city and each day was even more astonishing than the last. And for all of those great celebrations, gala dinners and banquets, what else was suited to toast this extraordinary moment in Parisian history but fine cognac? And the finest was, of course, Courvoisier. After all, Courvoisier was presented at the grand opening of the Eiffel Tower during the exposition, a monumental event at which some of history's most iconic figures – kings and queens from around the world, famous inventors, artists and architects, and Gustave Eiffel himself – came together to enjoy a luxury banquet in the ultrafashionable restaurant that Eiffel and his team had installed on the tower's second platform. The tower was festooned with 10,000 gaslights adding to the magical atmosphere and in the glasses of the assembled dignitaries was a fittingly celebratory drink – Courvoisier, the fine cognac then well known as the official cognac of Napoleon's imperial court, and which had won the wine and spirits gold medal at the 1867

Exposition Universelle. It was to do so again that very year. The Exposition Universelle of 1889 was the most spectacular and exciting yet in a sequence of such fairs designed to showcase France's tremendous achievements, not just in fine spirits but in the arts and sciences. These were achievements that people travelled from the far reaches of the world to witness. You can still feel the influence of Paris's last golden age whenever you raise a toast with a glass of Courvoisier. The cognac continues to capture that spirit of wonder, spectacle and splendour, adding an air of glamour and sophistication to any celebration. Its beautiful new bottle takes inspiration from the golden age and in particular details inspired by the Parisian architecture of the era, including the unique perspective looking up through the steel structure of the Eiffel Tower, are gracefully intertwined on the new Courvoisier design. It offers a glimpse back into history, alongside a jubilant vision of modernity. This new design coincides with a shift in modern imbibing that embodies the social and innovative atmosphere of the Paris golden age. Post-recession, drinkers are becoming much savvier regarding their drinks choice. Cognac is seen as the perfect cocktail spirit – luxurious, celebratory and with a wealth of history. Classic cocktails such as the Sidecar, Rendezvous and Champagne Cocktail are having a renaissance and giving drinkers a taste of cognac's heritage. The modern drinker thrives socially and wants this immersive, shareable experience. They are increasingly inquisitive and respectful of the process behind their drinks and lean towards spirits that can satisfy this demand. With its rich heritage, evocative design and perfect aromatic balance for classic cocktails, Courvoisier is the epitome of the modern luxury brand. A hundred years on from revolution, Paris was also the first capital city to be lit by gaslight, allowing its denizens to dance and party into the night. Never had the city seemed more cosmopolitan, more alive. The Art Nouveau style lent its languid grace to doorways and windows, restaurants such as Maxim's, and Hector Guimard's unmistakable Metropolitan entrances. A daring and bohemian way of life took hold, cabaret sprang up, and artists, writers and musicians thronged to the city. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, a name synonymous with the age, became known for walking with a cane hollowed out to conceal a unique flask that could hold his favoured Courvoisier which, in turn, could be used to invent new cocktails during his famed Friday night parties.

“Cognac is seen as the perfect cocktail spirit – luxurious, celebratory and with a wealth of history”

For more information please visit courvoisier.com/uk

No place quite like it for Parisian chic

There can hardly be a more glamorous and glittering address than the Place Vendôme in Paris, a square teeming with world-class jewellers, well-toned security guards and celebrity visitors

LUXURY GOODS

CLAIRE ADLER

This month marks the first time in almost four years that the Ritz Hotel in Paris, located on Place Vendôme, is taking bookings. Before it closed in 2012 for refurbishment, guests at a party hosted by Louis Vuitton dined on the hotel's covered swimming pool during an evening where guests included supermodel Natalia Vodianova, Princess Charlene of Monaco and Parisian high society.

It was the Ritz Hotel that originally attracted the world's luxury jewellers and watchmakers to the Place Vendôme, thanks to the fact that when Swiss business genius César Ritz opened the hotel in 1898, it became the world's first to offer en suite bathrooms, telephones and electricity in every room. Perhaps unsurprising then that the Place Vendôme was destined to lure the ultra-high-net-worth individuals of its day.

"For over three centuries, the Place Vendôme has been a theatre of Parisian life, which has played host to the likes of Queen Elizabeth II, Princess Diana, Hemingway, Proust, Chopin and Chanel," says Béatrice de Plinval, president of the Comité Vendôme, and curator and museum archivist at Chaumet.

Nowadays, the Comité Vendôme counts 24 jewellers and 18 watchmakers among its residents. They include Boucheron, whose founder Frédéric Boucheron moved there in 1893, Cartier, Chanel, Breguet, Hublot, Rolex, Vacheron Constantin, Louis Vuitton, Chaumet and Van Cleef & Arpels, whose jewellery and watchmaking school L'École Van Cleef & Arpels opened in 2012.

The school has since welcomed more than 2,200 students from 30 countries for courses in French and English, covering topics including recognising gemstones, art nouveau and talisman jewels. When it travelled with Van Cleef & Arpels experts to Tokyo, more than 600 enthusiasts attended classes.

World-class jewellers regularly talk wistfully of the 1920s as a time of burgeoning creativity and handsome excess. In 1928 the Indian Maharajah of Patiala walked into the Boucheron store on Place Vendôme, bringing with him 7,571 diamonds and 1,432 emeralds, and placed an order for what remains, according to Boucheron, the Place Vendôme's largest and most important commission, comprising more than 140 pieces of jewellery.

Other Boucheron clients have ranged from the Grand Duke Alexander of Russia, to the Tsar Al-



exander III, Elizabeth the Queen Mother, whose Boucheron tiara created in 1929 became one of her favourites, Queen Rania of Jordan and Hollywood celebrities Nicole Kidman and Penelope Cruz.

The Ritz Hotel was home to Coco Chanel for decades, including the duration of the Second World War when she lived there with her German lover. When Chanel redesigned its Place Vendôme boutique in 2007, it launched a jewellery collection named 18 Place Vendôme.

Chaumet's current location at 12 Place Vendôme was once home to composer Chopin. Above the store, Chaumet's Ephemeral Museum now showcases a rotating exhibition of archive and contemporary pieces which changes every six months.

Next summer, Louis Vuitton will open the doors to a shopping



destination ten times the size of its current Place Vendôme store. It will offer leather goods, ready-to-wear clothing, watches and fine jewellery, with the pinnacle taking the form of an entire top floor dedicated to its jewellery-making workshop.

01 Place Vendôme, Paris

02 Cartier is among the 24 jewellers on Place Vendôme

03 Place Vendôme from the Coco Chanel Suite at the Hotel Ritz

04 Founder of Boucheron Frédéric Boucheron moved the exclusive jewellery store to the Place Vendôme in 1893



"Paris and the Place Vendôme have maintained their position as the world's number-one location for jewellery design because Paris has kept its jewellery design schools. Most jewellers here train their own staff, so you can always find people with the traditional skills required to create high-class jewellery," says Louis Vuitton's vice president of watches and jewellery Hamdi Chatti.

Francis Mertens, who has created jewellery for various jewellers on Place Vendôme over the last two decades, says there is no place like it on Earth. "Architect Jules Hardouin-Mansart created a magical place to both work and live. No-where else in the world so fully embraces the way luxury is created and developed as the Place Vendôme," he says.

The Place Vendôme might be a square where dreams are made, but the French luxury goods industry is not without its challenges. Figures released in May by Geneva-headquartered Richemont, owners of Cartier, Van Cleef & Arpels and Vacheron Constantin, revealed group sales plunged 18 per cent in April. Struggling with the strong Swiss franc, Richemont is cutting almost 100 jobs in its watchmaking operations and shares have fallen by 5.6 per cent.

"Following the Paris terror attacks in November, luxury goods companies reported a tourism slowdown into Paris, which has extended to the first quarter of 2016. New bookings into Europe are also soft, perhaps exacerbated by the

weak Chinese yuan," says senior luxury analyst at Bloomberg Intelligence Deborah Aitken. "In the absence of further hostilities and assuming no major change in the euro, tourist visits in the second half of the year should improve. Tourist flows typically take six to nine months after an event to return to a region."

When asked what they are doing to innovate and embrace technology and appeal to new consumers, most luxury brands remain tight-lipped. But it's worth noting that a Cartier Diamonds video has garnered more than 15 million views on YouTube since it went live in

November. Meanwhile, an internal Richemont conference next week in Geneva is entitled Connectivity 360/365.

And if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, Qatar is about to pay the Place Vendôme the ultimate compliment.

Drawing inspiration from Place Vendôme in Paris, United Developers in Qatar, the world's fastest growing luxury market, are in the throes of creating their very own project called Place Vendôme. Drawing inspiration from Place Vendôme in Paris, United Developers in Qatar, the world's fastest growing luxury market, are in the throes of creating their very own project called Place Vendôme, slated to open in late-2017. It will comprise two five-star hotels, serviced apartments, a mall with up to 400 stores and a central entertainment amphitheatre. Developers claim it will bring "a unique experience of fine fashion, luxury, lifestyle and architecture to the Middle East".

Three bright stars on the horizon...

Three major French cities have been reborn through imaginative regeneration programmes which are attracting visitors from around the world



REGENERATION
JANE KNIGHT

01 MARSEILLES

Given its gritty past, it was perhaps no surprise that Marseilles stars as the setting for the Netflix series starring Gérard Depardieu as the coke-snorting mayor. Yet France's second city has undergone a huge metamorphosis from criminal to cultural capital of the Mediterranean and, in 2013, was crowned European capital of culture.

As part of a massive €7 billion (£5.3 billion) facelift, it is now home

to some seriously eye-catching architecture. Norman Foster's Ombrière, a huge mirrored sunshade of polished steel, graces the revamped Vieux Port. The Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations, France's only standalone national museum outside Paris, cuts a stunning silhouette on the waterfront, covered in a lattice work of black concrete. Just next door is the Villa Méditerranée, with a cantilevered exhibition hall above a swimming pool and conference centre.

Direct Eurostar services from London started last year, taking six-and-a-half hours. Add to that Mar-



seilles' star role in Euro 2016, with a crunch semi-final in the revamped Stade Velodrome, and it's easy to see why this city is taking centre stage.



02 BORDEAUX

Corks were popping in France's wine capital last week for the official opening of the Cité du

Vin. A high-tech museum showcasing Bordeaux's wine heritage, the futuristic building with a vast glass tower rising from the banks of the Garonne is also symbolic of the city's recent makeover.

Under visionary mayor Alain Juppé, the city's tram network has been expanded, the centre pedestrianised and the riverfront opened up. Much of Bordeaux is now on the Unesco World Heritage List as an "outstanding urban and architectural ensemble".

The transformation has attracted a raft of chic hotel openings, including Philippe Starck's Mama

Shelter, and some gastronomic eateries; both the chef Gordon Ramsay and Philippe Etchebest from the French equivalent of the television show *Kitchen Nightmares* now have restaurants in the central Place de la Comédie.

Add to this faster train links, which next year will see the journey time from Paris cut from three hours and fifteen minutes to two hours, plus a new football stadium that will host games in this summer's Euro 2016, and it's easy to see why Bordeaux has cause to celebrate.

03 NANTES

A 12-metre high robotic elephant, a three-storey carousel, and a mechanical menagerie from caterpillars to crabs aren't what you'd expect in a city once famous for its shipyards, biscuit production and as a slave port. But the wacky workshop of Machines de l'île has helped transform Nantes into a vibrant city where culture is king.

The change started when Jean Marc Ayrault became mayor in 1989, investing massively in culture. The biscuit company LU's former factory became a cultur-



al centre in 2000. Seven years later, the Chateau des Ducs de Bretagne opened celebrating the

city's eclectic history, and the robotic heaven of Machines de l'île opened in the old Chantiers de la Loire shipyards.

In the summer, they form some of the 30 stops on a giant cultural trail and arts festival. It's clearly been a success; in the five years from 2010 to 2015, the city had almost a 50 per cent increase, to half a million, in overnight stays in July and August, according to the tourist board.



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Exporting French lifestyle and

French exports span a wide range of goods and services, from aerospace and luxury, telecoms and cars to biros, ra

EXPORTS
ANWER BATI

Walk around South Kensington, the heart of London's French community, and you can get a taste of France, literally, with the many food shops and restaurants catering for Gallic gastronomes. With the area's Lycée, Insitut Français and French bookshop, you will also get a flavour of French culture. Go a few hundred yards to Sloane Street and, with shops such as Hermes, Dior, Saint Laurent, Paule Ka and Chloé, you can experience French chic in its most stylish and expensive form.

For most of us in Britain, these places sum up French exports and perhaps France itself – food, drink, creativity, fragrances and fashion. But this image doesn't begin to do justice to the vast variety of French products that we use.

France is, after all, the world's sixth largest exporter, with sales of goods amounting to €455.1 billion (£347 billion) in 2015. This is a small improvement on the previous year and has seen the United States becoming France's second biggest market after Germany. French exports tend to be particularly concentrated in high value-added areas, some of which you might expect. But others might surprise you.

In fact, the biggest success story is France's aerospace industry, which accounts for more than 10 per cent of total exports and punches well above its weight, not only through France's role in assembling Airbus planes in Toulouse, but also through companies such as fighter and executive jet maker Dassault.

And there is also another important factor. In the words of Vincent Gorry of GIFAS, the body that represents the French aerospace industry: "If you buy an aircraft, there are some parts you can't change, but others that you can, such as the seats, engines, wheels and brakes. Typically French companies that make these sorts of parts sell not only to Airbus, but also directly to foreign companies.

"The success of Airbus has allowed them to become more efficient and competitive. They export almost half of their turnover. And more than 80 per cent of French aerospace manufacture is exported."

Above all, he stresses: "In France we can make all the parts and products in the market – passenger jets, business planes, fighters, helicopters and turbo props. We are second only to the

United States." France's trade surplus in aerospace, as a result, is more than €22 billion (£16.8 billion).

Transport in general is a major contributor to the French economy, with the automotive industry, not only car makers such as Peugeot and Renault, but also commercial vehicles and components, recovering from a major downturn in 2009 to show an increase in exports of almost 9 per cent last year.

The British think of themselves as a maritime nation but, with its considerable coastline, France is no landlubber either, with almost 5,000 companies involved in the manufacture of pleasure boats and parts. Almost two thirds of the €4-billion (£3-billion) annual sales consist of exports. Leading names include Beneteau, founded in 1884, with its range of sailing yachts, power boats and motor cruisers on which to lead the good life.

Packaged medicines and pharmaceuticals generally are another less obvious area of exports, amounting to 6.4 per cent in 2015, led by Sanofi, the world's fourth largest pharmaceutical company. But the French subsidiaries of foreign drug manufacturers also play a major part with American giant Lilly, for instance, exporting 80 per cent of its French production.

"A lot of foreign companies invest in France to re-export mainly because of our productivity, strong infrastructure and logistics," says Muriel Penicaud, chief executive of Business France, the equivalent of government-backed UK Trade & Investment. Remarkably, a third of French exports are actually made by foreign firms.

More invisibly, France is the world's third largest exporter of services, amounting to €266 billion (£202.6 billion) last year, in areas such as telecoms, insurance, finance and events.

And it's easy to overlook French exports of everyday items from businesses such as BIC, the second biggest player in Europe and North America for its pens and disposable razors. As befits a company from the country that gave us Gauloises and Gitanes, BIC dominates the world market in cigarette lighters.

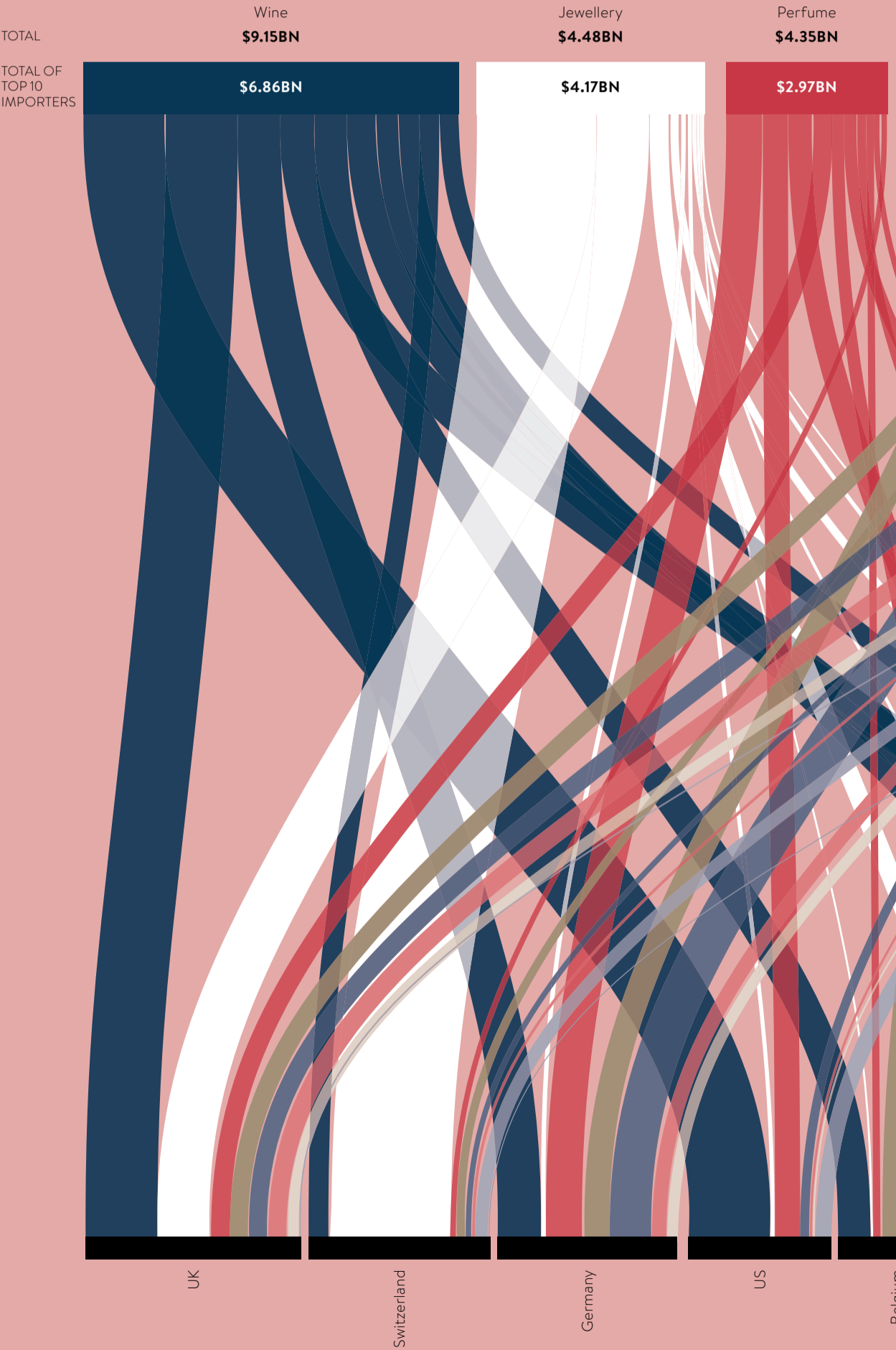
But the British image of French exports is by no means wrong. When it comes to lifestyle and elegance, the world still sees France as the leader, with a 9 per cent increase in the export of luxury goods last year.

The biggest players are the conglomerates Kering (brands include Saint Laurent, Gucci and Puma) and Bernard Arnault's LVMH group of more than 60 companies, which produce everything to tempt the well-heeled

“When it comes to lifestyle and elegance, the world still sees France as the leader”

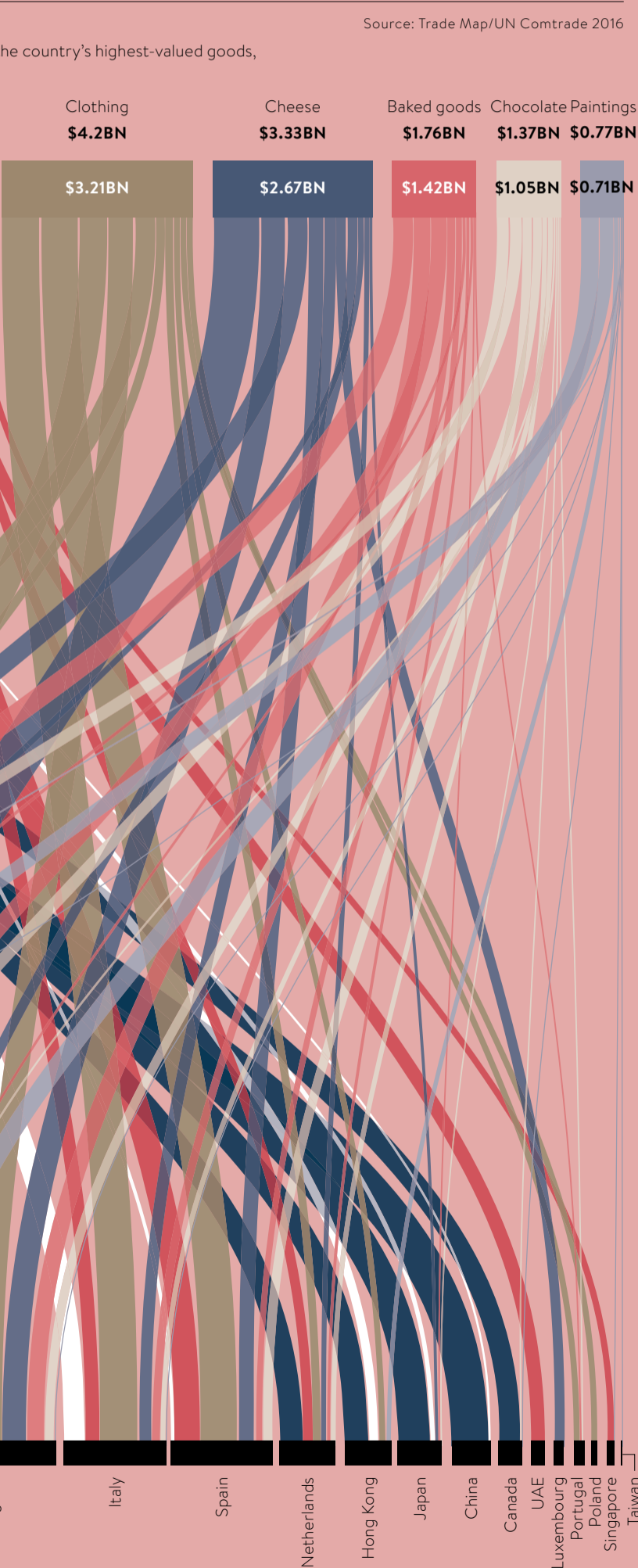
FRENCH EXPORTS AND TOP 10 IMPORTERS

France exported \$572 billion of goods in 2015, making it the sixth largest exporter in the world. While aircraft, cars and medicines are t there are many other exports to varied markets



know-how to an eager world

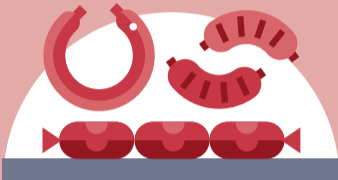
razors and disposable lighters, bringing in multi-billions to the national economy



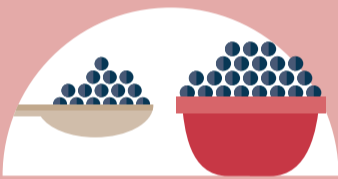
ALTERNATIVE EXPORTS AND MOST POPULAR MARKETS



BEER	TOTAL
	\$387M
01 Spain	\$123.7M
02 UK	\$48.9M
03 Belgium	\$47.5M



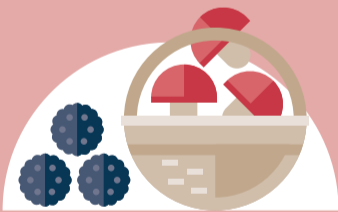
SAUSAGES	TOTAL
	\$187M
01 Germany	\$53.1M
02 Belgium/Luxembourg	\$49.6M
03 UK	\$20.7M



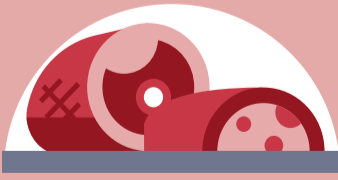
CAVIAR	TOTAL
	\$170.2M
01 Belgium	\$33.7M
02 UK	\$25.6M
03 Italy	\$20.5M



CIGARS AND CIGARETTES	TOTAL
	\$93.9M
01 Belgium	\$15.1M
02 Spain	\$10.4M
03 Tunisia	\$8.7M



MUSHROOMS AND TRUFFLES	TOTAL
	\$46.5M
01 US	\$15.3M
02 Germany	\$10.5M
03 Belgium	\$3.4M



HORSEMEAT	TOTAL
	\$24.6M
01 Italy	\$9.4M
02 Switzerland	\$7.4M
03 Belgium	\$5.7M

from champagne (Krug and Dom Perignon), to fashion (Marc Jacobs), to scent (Guerlain) and watches (Hublot). Hermes, equally a byword for eye-wateringly expensive leather goods (think Birkin and Kelly bags costing thousands) and accessories, has celebrated particularly strong growth in Japan so far this year.

“The middle class around the world is growing,” explains Ms Penicaud, “creating a demand for the best, which France is seen as providing in many sectors. And luxury is highly profitable.”

Again fitting the image, perfumes, cosmetics and grooming products are among France’s most important exports, led by L’Oréal, the world’s biggest beauty company.

And what would our idea of France be without le vin? Actually, world-wide wine sales in terms of volume, though not value, fell slightly last year. But spirits did much better. The Chinese are proving to be particularly partial to French tipples, importing 30 per cent more wine last

year than in 2014. There was also a considerable increase in sales to the United States, but the Americans are clearly discerning drinkers, preferring finer wines and champagne to everyday plonk.

In Britain, according to Anne Burchett, of French food and drink marketing organisation Sopexa: “French wines have lost ground over the last 15 years in the off-trade, because there are so many other countries competing, but they are still the leader in restaurants.” Despite that, Britain is still France’s second best customer.

It’s not just French wine and spirits that slake our thirst. Even without the rumour, unfounded as it turned out, that Selfridges in London was going to open a water bar, we should need little reminding as we knock back the refreshing Vittel, Perrier or Evian that France is the world’s biggest exporter of mineral water, bringing in €600 million (£457 million) in foreign sales.

Fine food, of course, is key to the French art de vivre and the world’s vision of France. It’s a sign of sophistication wherever you are and accounts for as much as a tenth of French exports. Temptations include packaged products, such as chocolate, biscuits, charcuterie, jams, yogurts from companies such as Danone, and butter. Britain is a leading importer of all of these.

And what would life be without French cheese, particularly less pungent varieties, which accounts for €3 billion (£2.3 billion) of exports, with the Germans taking the lead, and a growing number of gourmets in the Middle East and Asia developing a fondness for fromage.

French fruit and vegetables also tickle our taste buds, both directly and indirectly as it’s little known that France is the world’s leading exporter of agricultural crop seeds.

So French products play a major part in our lives, whether we realise it or not. The last word goes to Ms Penicaud of Business France, who neatly sums up French exports: “If you want to buy a sailing boat with good food, fine wine and pure mineral water on board, along with a high-quality cigarette lighter and sunscreen, good insurance, a full first aid kit, and, for when you land, luxury clothing and a memorable perfume – buy from France.”

“The middle class around the world is growing, creating a demand for the best, which France is seen as providing in many sectors

COMMERCIAL FEATURE

FRENCH COUTURE ONLINE AT AFFORDABLE PRICES

This is a very French story – one of constant innovation through tumultuous times, one of style and effortless chic in which women have played a central role

La Redoute

La Redoute, which operates eight international subsidiaries from Portugal to Russia by way of Britain, owes its name to the street where, in 1837, Joseph Pollet and his son Charles built the first wool spinning mill of Roubaix, in northern France.

Just after the First World War, this family of entrepreneurs and inventors, always thinking ahead of their time, decided to launch a mail order business to help sell old stocks of wool and generate new product lines.

A few years later, in 1928, the first La Redoute catalogue, a 16-page booklet entirely focused on knitting, was born. This was the beginning of a long love story between La Redoute and women.

Success was immediate and spread by word of mouth like wildfire. La Redoute quickly expanded its range of products and, alongside knitting and knitwear, clothes and furniture soon adorned the catalogue.

The idea was, and remains to this day, to conceive, design and produce locally, in the family's factories, and to make French style affordable to all. By 1962, La Redoute offered 50,000 different products and printed 14 million copies of its catalogue, and for many more decades to come would maintain its position as leader in the distance-selling business.

La Redoute, growing bigger every year, slowly became a permanent feature in family homes. Generations of women eagerly awaited the arrival of the catalogue in their letterbox each summer.

Today, 90 per cent of its ten million customers, spread over 26 countries, are women – and it is no coincidence. The secret of its success lies right here. Women in France and Britain, where the brand has recently celebrated its 20th anniversary, remember those August days browsing through the catalogue, with their grandmother and mother, aunts and sisters at their side, comparing models, discussing cuts and fabrics.

They all remember folding back pages and the thrill of finally

choosing and ordering next season's new outfit. Millions of dog-eared catalogues can indeed be found in French and British homes even if La Redoute is now a thriving online business, generating 85 per cent of its turnover from internet sales with seven million unique monthly online visitors.

If La Redoute has been so popular with women it is because it has always paid attention to them, to their concerns and to their needs, and has evolved with the times, often ahead of social change.



With its look-books on Instagram, its capsule collections and pop-up stores flowering in European cities from Liverpool to Marseille, La Redoute has managed to win over a fourth generation of women

Just a few months after the student protests of May 1968, La Redoute commissioned its first capsule collection of 16 outfits from the designer Emmanuelle Khanh, a former model and a pioneer of prêt-à-porter of the sixties known as the Mary Quant of French fashion.

Her colourful collection, designed for working women, was an instant hit with its 100,000 limited edition sold out in a few weeks. The formula was so successful that, decades before today's behemoth high-street retailers, La Redoute pioneered partnerships with prominent couturiers.

Karl Lagerfeld, Jean-Paul Gaultier, Sonia Rykiel, Yves Saint Laurent, Courrèges and more, recently Carven and Sézane, young fashionistas' favourites, have been among those who lent their talent



COMMERCIAL FEATURE



01
Sweater 9440666
Top 9448683
Skirt 9431152
Belt 7707550

02
Bikini 9218777

03
Swimsuit 9219528

04
Dress 6999352

05
Blouse 8586616
Trousers 9002928

06
Jacket 9427635
Skirt 9430393

Find online at
laredoute.co.uk



“

La Redoute is the place where couture meets street, where high-art designers reach the everyday woman

to this most democratic exercise to create a limited edition of beautiful clothes at affordable prices.

The collection Carven designed for British women this year perfectly incarnates this spirit. The creative directors of the Paris couture house founded in 1945 by Madame Carven, and adored by celebrities including Alexa Chung and Diane Kruger, authored a series of figure- flattering, nipped-in waists and mini hemlines, starting at only £29, with nothing coming in at over £149.

Faithful to the forward-looking spirit of its founders, La Redoute has never stopped innovating in other key domains. As a customer care champion, the brand is known

and appreciated for its speedy delivery and no-questions returns policy. It was the first to use local shops for free delivery, decades before giant retailers such as Amazon did.

With its look-books on Instagram, its capsule collections and pop-up stores flowering in European cities from Liverpool to Marseille, La Redoute has managed to win over a fourth generation of women.

La Redoute is the place where couture meets street, where high-art designers reach the everyday woman. It is also the only mail order company which is so forward-looking and versatile that it manages to keep up with fashion's ever-changing unique styles.

Constantly reinventing itself and yet grounded in French history and family traditions, attentive to women's changing lives and their needs, La Redoute remains a byword for simple and natural chic affordable for the woman in the street who values elegance on a budget.

For more information please visit
laredoute.co.uk



90%
of its ten million customers are women



26
countries worldwide



85%
of turnover is from internet sales



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Kick-starting a d

France is kick-starting its digital economy with government-backed startups to create a tech cluster with the aim of rivalling Silicon

DIGITAL INNOVATION

AGNES POIRIER

Three years ago, the French telecom billionaire Xavier Niel, an autodidact who made a fortune from the age of 18 developing and investing in new technologies such as the Minitel, the world's most successful pre-internet online service in the early-1980s, had a rather harsh view of digital innovation in France.

"France is the world's fifth largest economy, but only the world's twentieth digital economy. It is vital that France trains its youth for the jobs of the future and the future is digital. A revolution is needed. Now," he insisted.

His plea was heard and French President François Hollande immediately commissioned a white paper on *Building a fairer and more creative education in a digital society*, and created a ministry for digital affairs. He chose the 40-year-old Franco-Canadian Axelle Lemaire to run it and, in the last three years, Ms Lemaire has worked hard on a new law, currently going through parliament, which promotes, develops and regulates digital activities.

Furthermore, the French government announced that coding was to be taught to children from the age of six through to their final year of baccalaureate. For Benoît Thieulin, digital entrepreneur and dean at the prestigious Paris Institute of Political Science, also known as Sciences-Po, and an ardent advocate of digital education, the 2015 terrorist attacks on the French capital showed the urgency of learning how to exist in a society which partly lives on social networks.

"It is important that children and teenagers learn how to master digital tools, but also be able to question their usage, and be critical. It is not only about training the future developers and coders of the country, but also educating citizens," says Mr Thieulin.

Another part of the digital programme taught in school is based around social networks and how to use them for a democratic debate. "Pupils must appropriate the digital world rather than remain passive digital consumers," he says.

Thanks to Mr Niel and a few others, digital innovation in France has become the byword for an educational, social, business and democratic revolution.

In parallel, and as if on cue, France's tech scene has grown exponentially. Just last year, around 115 funding deals amounted to €960 million (£737 million). According to Tech.eu, this places



01



02

“
Digital innovation in France has become the byword for an educational, social, business and democratic revolution

France in the billion-euro club alongside Germany and Israel. And in just two years, from 2013 to 2015, French government-backed investor Bpifrance doubled the number of startups it financed from 1,500 to 3,000 a year.

Only three years after Mr Niel's speech, Paris has become an international hub of both digital educa-

tion and entrepreneurship. Startup incubators are springing like mushrooms in former dilapidated railway yards and Art Deco warehouses.

One of France's future flagships is the Halles Freyssinet. In January, Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo visited the building site of this listed railway yard, in the south east of the French capital, which is being turned into an ultra-modern hub for a thousand tech entrepreneurs.

This £150-million private-public joint project aims to make Paris the world's leading innovation metropolis. While the renovation of the 35,000-square-metre hall is paid through private investment, and notably Mr Niel, the city has pledged €70 million (£54 million) in building housing, shops, walkways and gardens all around.

Halles Freyssinet will be open for business ahead of schedule, accord-

Digital revolution

Working, training for coders and engineers, and investment in Silicon Valley



01
Artist's impression of La Halle Freyssinet in Paris, the planned world's largest digital business incubator

02
Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo with Xavier Niel (centre) during a visit to the Halle Freyssinet site

ing to French architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte and startups are already queuing to get a place for the opening in just six months' time, in January 2017.

Former Microsoft manager Roxanne Varza, who was in charge of overseeing the company's startup initiatives, will supervise the selection. The idea is to build a strong and unique ecosystem located in one place and address Paris's current dense, but fragmented, technological map.

Some of those vying for a place at Halles Freyssinet will be coming straight from a joint programme run by the elite business school Hautes Etudes Commerciales, the Paris engineering university, and École 42, set up in the capital by Mr Niel.

This nine-week programme for 120 graduates, who work in pools of three – one coder, one engineer and one business person – aims to develop digital projects from their concept to the final pitch in front of investors both in Paris and London. The first round this year has seen a variety of projects, including dating sites, education, leisure, connected objects, but also innovating and ambitious hardware tools.

Mr Niel, the man who narrowly missed the opportunity to buy Google's French licence in the early-2000s, likes saying he receives around 1,000 requests a week for investment from people hoping to launch startup companies. He says he goes through them all and picks three to invest in every week. Investing in innovation, whether in business or education, is his passion.

CASE STUDY: ÉCOLE 42



It is a school many students dream of – everybody gets a scholarship plus free accommodation and there is no need to provide any references or indeed prove you have passed formal exams to get in.

Indeed, if you have flunked every exam in your life, all the better, at least in the eyes of the philanthropist who funds the school from his own pocket.

Xavier Niel, a self-made man, known for his anti-establishment views, has created École 42 in Paris as an incubator of talent. Anyone between the ages of 18 and 30 can apply. They have first to pass logic tests and the 3,000 or so pre-selected

candidates have to spend a month in "the pool" where both their determination and raw talent for thinking digitally are assessed.

This intense immersion, when candidates have to code for 14 hours a day, selects the survivors.

Students work on projects such as conceiving software, programming a virus, creating a video game and so on. Once they have finished their project, he or she can move on to a more sophisticated one and so forth until they graduate.

There are around 40 staff members who supervise students' work, but assessment is mostly done peer to peer.

With the school open 24 hours a day and seven days a week, students can progress either very fast or slowly. The idea is to help train tomorrow's digital geniuses, developers and coders.

École 42 owes its name to the geeks' bible *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* in which the computer-generated answer to the meaning of life equals... 42.

Following the creation of his École 42, Mr Niel has just returned from Silicon Valley where he has launched a second School 42, this time in Fremont, a few minutes away from the headquarters of Google, Apple and Y Combinator. It will operate from November and aims to attract 10,000 students within five years.

With a \$100-million investment from his own pocket, Mr Niel intends to teach the Americans how to train the world's new coders and to fight social discrimination. Just like in France, School 42 will be free and provide free accommodation, and recruit among social categories usually left on the side of the road by traditional universities.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics estimate that 1.4 million jobs will be created by 2020 in the digital and IT sector with only a third of American graduates able to fill the positions. With its engineering traditions and innovation reputation, French entrepreneurs think they can make a difference, whether in Paris or Silicon Valley.

TURNING PARIS INTO THE WORLD'S LARGEST DIGITAL BUSINESS INCUBATOR



35k
square metres of unique working space will be created in the Halles Freyssinet building



3,036
work stations



3 parts
of the building will feature a forum for meetings and sharing digital skills/technology, a dedicated startup area, and a 24-hour multi-functional restaurant

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Sharing art and French savoir faire

Compelled by budget cuts at home, French museums are looking overseas to establish outposts – in return for foreign cash

MUSEUM OUTPOSTS
FARAH NAYERI

Leonardo da Vinci's sumptuous *Portrait of an Unknown Woman*, known by its French title *La Belle Ferronnière*, is one of the proudest possessions of the Musée du Louvre. So far, anyone wishing to see it has had to make their way to Paris, where *La Belle* lives. Soon, however, the Renaissance lady will be taking up residence for a year in Abu Dhabi, where the Louvre is opening a satellite museum.

For the first time in its history, France is opening outposts of its national museums on foreign soil. As the government earmarks less and less money to culture every year, museums in France, as elsewhere, are having to come up with evermore creative ways to raise funds. Opening offshoots abroad is a path that more than one museum is taking.

The Louvre Abu Dhabi is the most spectacular example. Following a 2007 agreement between the governments of France and Abu Dhabi, skillfully negotiated by the Louvre's then general administrator Didier Selles, a consortium of French cultural institutions, led by the Louvre, but also including the Musée d'Orsay, the Pompidou Centre, the Château de Versailles and a dozen or so others, are lending their savoir faire and, for the first ten years, works of art to the nascent Gulf institution.

In exchange, these institutions (the Louvre being foremost among them) are receiving €1 billion (£774 million) from Abu Dhabi over a 30-year period. The money will help open up new wings, manage and maintain collections and buildings, pay for restorations, and buy works.

The architect of the Louvre Abu Dhabi is the Pritzker Prize-winning Jean Nouvel. The building he has designed is recognisable by a vast, discus-shaped dome, with perforations

that cast speckled shadows on the ground beneath. With construction now more or less complete, the edifice will soon be handed over to the museum's administrators, who will get it ready to host the art and the visitors. The date of the opening is yet to be set.

Featuring 6,000 square metres of permanent display space and another 2,000 square metres of exhibition galleries, Louvre Abu Dhabi will, in its inaugural year, show 600 works, some borrowed, others acquired. Masterpieces flying over from Paris include not only the Leonardo, but also Edouard Manet's *The Fife Player* (1866) and Vincent van Gogh's *Self-Portrait* (1887).

The Pompidou Centre in Paris already has a foreign outpost up and running. As of March 2015, and for a total of five years, residents of Malaga in southern Spain have had their very own pop-up Pompidou. The mini-museum is housed inside the Cubo, a cultural centre built on the harbour in 2013, where its glass-cube exterior has been given a multi-coloured casing by the French contemporary artist Daniel Buren.

“The money will help open up new wings, manage and maintain collections and buildings, pay for restorations, and buy works

A compressed version of its Paris parent, Pompidou Malaga has attracted a whopping 220,000 people in its inaugural year. On the Malaga menu are 90 works borrowed from Pompidou Paris, including paintings by Pablo Picasso, Francis Bacon and Frida Kahlo, and two temporary ex-



Centre Pompidou

01

01 Centre Pompidou Málaga, which opened in March 2015, is the only branch of the museum outside France

02 The Emirates' version of the Louvre museum is being built on a new artificial Island of Saadiyat in the United Arab Emirates of Abu Dhabi

03 Artist's impression of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, due to open in late-2016



Getty Images

02

hibitions, one of Joan Miro's works on paper and the other of women photographers of the 1920s and 1930s.

The Pompidou is heading to Asia next with museums planned in South Korea's capital Seoul and China. There again, economics are a driving force. Pompidou receives a fee of between €1.5 million and €2 million a year from the city which hosts one of its mobile museums, not a negligible sum in these lean budgetary times.

The replication of French museums has not been to everyone's liking. When the Louvre Abu Dhabi project was first reported, it was met with a ferocious backlash from senior figures in the French museum world. Françoise Cachin, ex-director of the Musée d'Orsay and one-time head of the French national museum authority, teamed up with the Picasso Museum's ex-director Jean Clair and Professor Roland Recht, of the Collège de France, to publish an irate column in *Le Monde*.

"It's our political leaders who went over to present this royal and diplomatic gift," the trio wrote of France's



Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority

03

accord with Abu Dhabi. "Isn't that selling one's soul?" Ms Cachin and her fellow signatories were adamant that sending priceless artworks halfway around the world posed a grave threat to their safety. They had nothing but scorn for the Louvre Abu Dhabi project.

Another vocal critic is writer Didier Rykner, who edits the online magazine *La Tribune de l'Art*. When details of the Louvre accord first

emerged, he started an online petition against Louvre Abu Dhabi that drew hundreds of signatories. He objected that politicians were dipping into the collections of the Louvre and France's other national museums with no other aim than money, and that there was no real curatorial or artistic programme underpinning the exercise.

Nearly a decade later, he continues to express qualms about Abu Dhabi. He maintains that works of art are being rented out to the Gulf emirate, even though no one is brave enough to use that term. He worries that a set of extremely fragile paintings and sculptures is being sent into a region of the world where geopolitical instability and the risk of conflict are even higher than they were when the accord was signed. He is critical of the Pompidou Centre, too, for shipping its art abroad. "There is something absurd about this obsession with circulating works," he says.

Still, with budgetary belt-tightening very much the order of the day, the future will probably see more, not less, museum replication. French art historians, critics and curators will doubtless continue to warn that masterpieces must be handled with care and displayed only where there is a valid scholarly purpose.

Yet French museums will be increasingly compelled to turn to outside sources for financing and to lend their brand, their know-how and collections to parts of the world where masterpieces of Western culture are all but inaccessible. In a century or so, Louvre Abu Dhabi and Pompidou Malaga will doubtless be singled out as the first of many French museum outposts.

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ABU DHABI LOUVRE FACTFILE	01 A cultural collaboration between Abu Dhabi and key French cultural institutions led by the Musée du Louvre and a dozen others	02 In return, these institutions - the Musée du Louvre being foremost among them - are receiving £1bn from Abu Dhabi over 30 years	03 The striking and innovative Louvre Abu Dhabi building was designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel	04 The museum will be located in the Saadiyat Island Cultural District and will feature 6,000 square metres of permanent display space and another 2,000 square metres of exhibition galleries	05 The building is expected to open in December 2016 or January 2017, according to the Tourism Development and Investment Company
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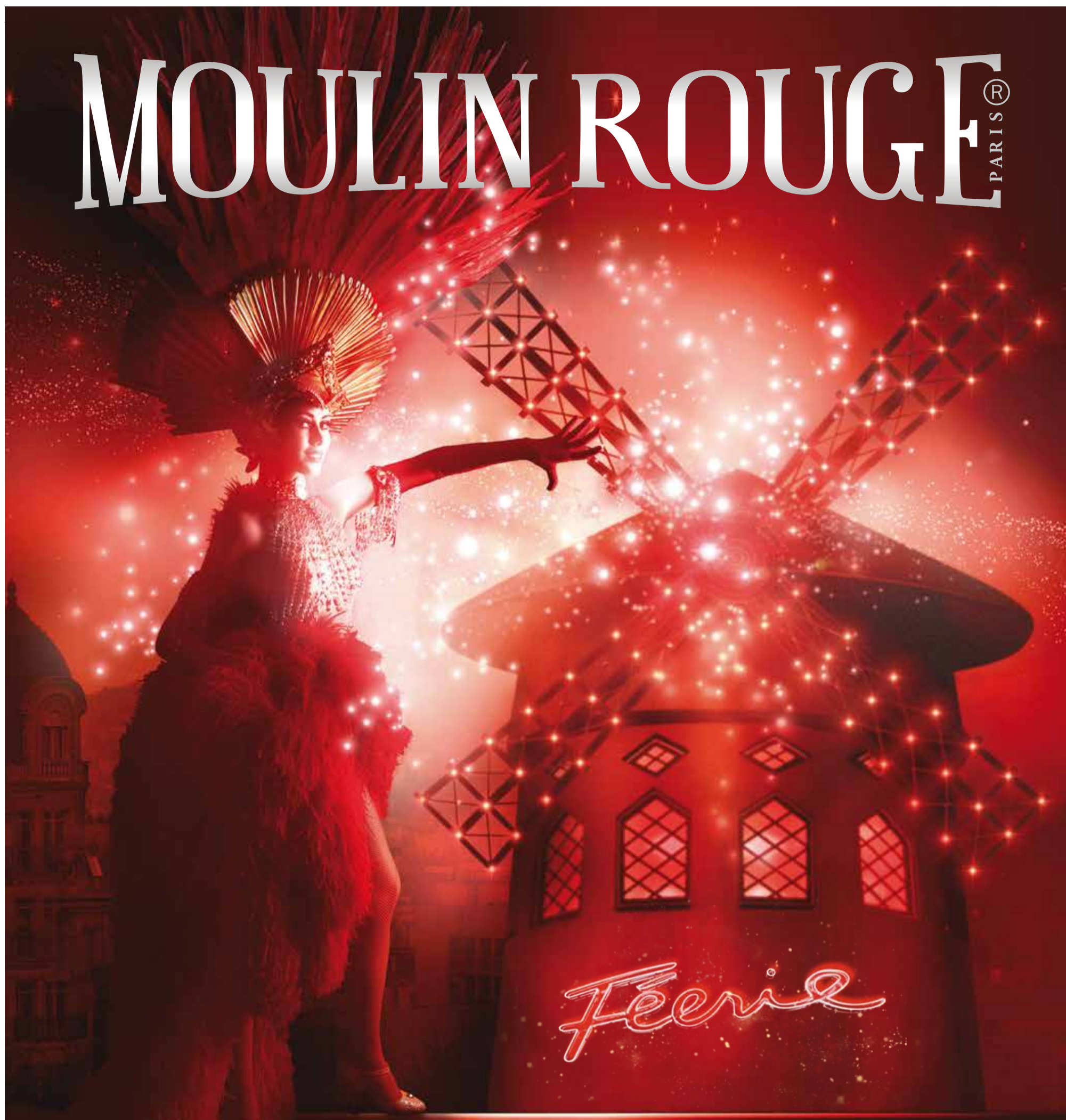
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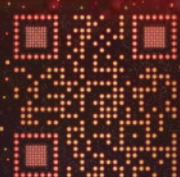
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