

CAFÉ ROYAL ITINERARY

John and Sara, two 30 something New Yorkers have been married for five years and have planned a celebratory trip to Europe. Below is how their experience of The Grand Tour by The Set Hotels unfolded day by day.

Saturday

6.30am Arrive at London Heathrow.

7.15am Greeted by Hotel Café Royal driver.

7.25am No rain in London! Sunglasses on.

8.30am Check in to hotel, our personal life-saver/travel advisor Melissa is personal friends of the hotels Managing Director, Guillaume Marly and she managed to get us upgraded to The Westminster Suite, Score!

8.45am Selfies in front of the view down to Houses of Parliament, uploading to social media. #humblebrag #hotellife #grandtourwiththeSethotels

10.30am Anti jetlag couples massage at Akasha Holistic Wellbeing Center, they weren't kidding when they said it would relax us, we both fell asleep!

12:30pm Meet head concierge Karim to discuss plans, wonderful to hear about his insights into the city, we feel like we're in good hands.

1.00pm Walk to lunch at The Wolseley

1:15pm Surprised by table in the inner circle booked by Karim and glass of champagne on the house. We spot Dame Helen Mirren at the table opposite, a reminder of how close we are to London's amazing theatreland. Next time we're in London we think it will be a theatre-trip, no taxis needed!

5:05pm A stroll along to Bond Street to the Saint Laurent store to see if they have the Sac du Jour sold-out in NYC – score!

5.30pm Run to Gieves and Hawkes at Number 1 Savile Row to meet with Andy, the head tailor for John's bespoke suit fitting.

7.00pm Cocktails in the Green Bar at Hotel Café Royal. Great conversation with Derren, head bartender, about the history of absinthe. Two cocktails before dinner and confirmation of a space on the guestlist at the Box nightclub, thanks Derren!

9.00pm Two spots at the bar at Kiln, London's hottest Thai restaurant secured, who needs to go to Bangkok when there is food this good in London!

Sunday

9.00am Cappuccinos in bed, the chicest wakeup call (how did they know we only drink almond milk. Our very own travel magician, Melissa from ABC Travel doing her thing again we presume?!)

10.00am Lazy breakfast in the restaurant. I can't believe we can get the eggs from Laurent Tourondel's Brasserie Ruhlmann here in London, my favourite New York brunch spot!

11.30am Walk up to the Photographer's Gallery in Soho to check out their exhibition, plenty of inspiration for our uploads over the next few days.

2.00pm A short walk to a late lunch at Scott's in Mayfair and a beautiful walk through this historic and tony neighbourhood to get there. Happy to find the bottle of Bordeaux recommended by Derren is on the menu.

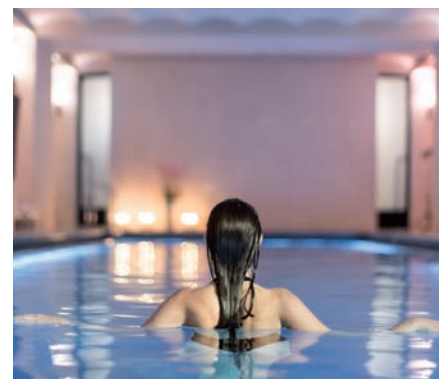
5.00pm Finally, a chance to try the famous Afternoon Tea in the Oscar Wilde Lounge at the hotel, endless sandwiches and cakes you say?

7.00pm 40 lengths of the Akasha pool to try and work off the afternoon tea and wake us up for dinner.

8:30pm Two club sandwiches and that Bordeaux again....wake up call at 9am please.



Traditional Afternoon Tea in the Oscar Wilde Lounge, Established 1865



The Natural History Museum / Cromwell Road, London



KILN - Thai Grill, Seafood & Claypots / Brewer St, Soho



KILN Restaurant - Inside

Monday

9.00am Two cappuccinos delivered with our confirmed Eurostar tickets, Paris today!

9.30am Porter arrives to collect our cases, to be delivered straight to our room at Lutetia, no heavy cases on the train for us!

10.00am Final breakfast at the restaurant, those eggs ordered again.

10:45am A good fifteen minutes taking shots of the restaurant and lobby below. Our waitress who is also studying architecture happily tells us all

about the designer Piero Lissoni who created the new lobby, just finished, we can't wait to see his work at the Conservatorium too.

10:50am The perfect time for some Instagram to make our friends back home envious, they will all see it when they wake up! #greatlobbiesoftheworld #pierolissoni #italiandesign #grandtourwiththeSethotels

A DELIGHTFUL EXPERIENCE

LUTETIA ITINERARY

3:30pm We arrive at the stunning Lutetia, what an amazing location, it just commands the street, we feel proud to arrive – and when we walked in everybody already knew our names, the lobby is gorgeous and the gallery the perfect spot for some selfies. #beautifulparis #iloveparis #grandtourwiththeSethotels

3:40pm Check into our Junior Suite – so chic! John loves the Murano glass detailing, and the closet is bigger than our guest room at home! And the bathroom....we thought Paris hotel rooms were supposed to be small?!

4:00pm Champagne popped (errrm, how do they know Krug is our favourite brand?!) and a couple of glasses – why not, champagne was invented in France right?

4:40pm A call from the reception manager to see if we'd like to have a sneak peak of the top suite with a terrace – how can we say no?

4:45pm I don't think I have ever seen a view like this, you can see all of Paris! This is where we are spending our 10th anniversary....

5:00pm There's that jetlag again.... we're glad to know Lutetia has an Akasha spa too let's see if we can stay awake this time...

6:18pm A call from the bar manager to our room – they've arranged a table in the Bar Aristide for us to enjoy some jazz and yet more Krug with some caviar on the house, we'd better get our gladrags on!

7:00pm We feel like F.Scott and Zelda.. gorgeous jazz playing in the same hotel Joesphine Baker played -#blessed #jazz #paris #grandtourwiththeSethotels

8:00pm Dinner at Le Racamier – according to the concierge this is a favourite of politicians and the literati

set of Paris – and we might be the only tourists! Its famous for Souffles.

10:15pm Arriving back at the hotel the concierge (who is also a wine aficionado and has visited the vineyard where our Bordeaux comes from – where do they get these guys?!) confirms our special tour of St. Germain booked for tomorrow.

Tuesday

10.00am Breakfast at L'Orangerie – how wonderful to sit here and have their breakfast 'à la Française', healthy and light.

11.00am We meet Nina, our fabulous local guide in the lobby, she is adorable, so French and chic (wearing a silk Hermes scarf of course) and brimming with fun facts about the area. She tells us, the Left Bank is the Parisian's Paris, the most fashionable people live and work here, and the history is amazing. We never knew that James Joyce wrote part of Ulysses at the Lutetia!

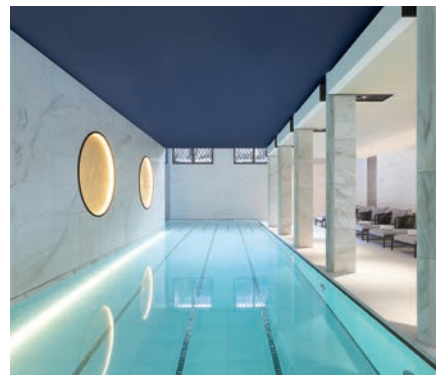
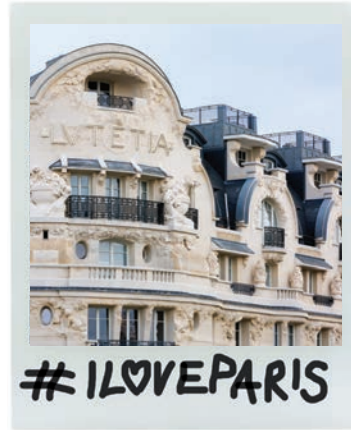
11:15am Our first stop is the Boulangerie Poilâne, the famous bakery. The St Germain store was their first bakery and they have a bread chandelier made by Salvador Dali! We meet the head baker and they ask us if we want to mix our own dough, this has got to be instagrammed. #jesuislechef #makingcroissants #grandtourwiththeSethotels

12:00pm The next stop is a dangerous one, the coolest chocolate store on the planet – Patrick Roger.

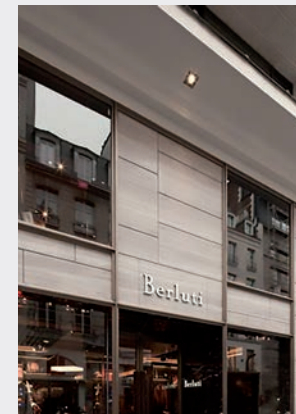
12:20pm The phone rings, our concierge has pulled some strings and managed to get us a lunch booking at Les Deux Magots, I wonder who we will see there?

12:30pm A brilliant table out front, all we need is a little poodle to fit right in. Gigi Hadid is inside, but we resist the urge to take a picture, we're Parisians now... Croque Monsieur for us both, with sparkling water, no wine, we've still got a lot to do.

2.00pm After lunch Nina picks us up again and tells us this afternoon is all about fashion. We head to Le Bon Marche, the iconic department store opposite the hotel to start our Fashion Tour.



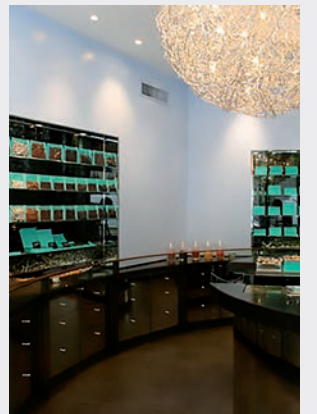
Le Bon Marché / Rue de Sèvres, Paris



Berluti - Shoes and bags / Paris



Patrick Roger Chocolate / Paris



Patrick Roger Chocolate shop - Inside

3:30pm A behind the scenes tour of the flagship Hermes boutique! Nina tells us that this kind of access is very rare as Hermes are so secretive about their operation, but we are able to meet the store manager and get the inside scoop on how to jump the queue to buy a Birkin bag....the scoop is that there is no way to jump the queue, but the manager says to check the boutique whenever one is nearby – another reason to come back to Paris.

6.00pm A final hour to ourselves to shop til we drop, the credit card is getting a great work out today....

9:00pm Dinner at the iconic Lutetia

Brasserie! We can't help but think we are at one of the best tables, none other than Gerald Passedat himself comes to the table to offer his advice, recommending his famous Seabream in Garlic Broth, we're so honoured to meet him and he assures us he will send a couple of extra treats to celebrate our anniversary.

Wednesday

11.00am After another wonderful breakfast at the hotel and a charming goodbye from our friends at reception it's off to Amsterdam we go! A quick taxi ride to the station and we're on board another gorgeous European

train – the Thalys. Our travel advisor told us to take the first-class option for a few dollars more and she was right – we even get a glass of wine and a meal!

TIMELESS ELEGANCE

CONSERVATORIUM ITINERARY

Thursday

2:24pm Arriving at Amsterdam for our first ever visit to this charming city, we found Marco, our private driver arranged by the Conservatorium on the train platform. He is as charming as we've come to expect from everyone involved in this trip and points out a particularly pretty set of canal houses for us to photograph. #weloveamsterdam #canals #grandtourwiththeSethotels

3:10pm Arriving at the Conservatorium hotel we understand why the location is so special – our travel advisor was being honest when she said it was in the heart of the Museum district! Directly opposite both the modern art museum, called the Stedelijk and the legendary Von Gogh museum, its also a 3 minute walk to the biggest of them all – the Rijksmuseum – we're spoiled for choice!

3:15pm One of the hosts (no such thing as a regular receptionist here at the supercool Conservatorium!) shows us to the room. Wow - a beautiful duplex with a view of the Stedelijk museum. Two bathrooms, that same incredibly comfortable bed we've gotten used to and very chic furniture – our host tells us it was all chosen by Piero Lissoni so we understand why it all works so well. Another excuse for a picture for our designer friends back home #Conservatorium #Italiandesign #grandtourwiththeSethotels

5:00pm Champagne on a boat tour organised by the hosts and a summer's evening on the canals – so romantic! We really get the feeling that the Dutch know how to live. So many young people relaxing by the canals, beautiful houses and a real sense of relaxation and fun. Restaurant Breda is quite new on the scene in the city but recommended by our host at the hotel. There is no menu so it's all a surprise, and a very pleasant one at that! 9 courses of modern Dutch cuisine, accompanied by great wines.

9:40am After another great sleep its breakfast in the Brasserie restaurant at the hotel, we can't believe the architecture of this place, a huge glass atrium in the middle of this gorgeous old building. No wonder they won so many awards when it opened. After all our indulgence it's great to see they have so many healthy options too – the heart wants a shakshuka, but the brain chooses the green egg-white omelette with spirulina and green juice!

11:00pm A quick visit to see the Banksy exhibition across the street. Amazing to see so much of the work in one place, our friends will be jealous! #weloveamsterdam #streetart #grandtourwiththeSethotels

12:15pm We meet our guide for our bicycle tour. Marie has lived in Amsterdam her whole life and what she doesn't know isn't worth knowing.

12:45pm First of all a stop at The Hermitage museum and a short tour. Marie studied the Dutch Masters so was able to walk us through the exhibition and really bring it to life.

4:00pm Back to the hotel via the Van Gogh Museum. The hotel has told the guide we've only got a couple of hours so she does an amazing job of taking us around the museum and explaining the artist's tragic life using the paintings to show us. She tells us that yellow was a colour of hope to Van Gogh and it made so much sense!

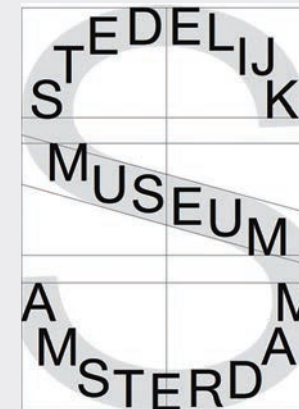
5:30pm Some shopping at Tod's and Louis Vuitton on PC Hoofstradt, the 5th Avenue of Amsterdam near the hotel – loving the chic selection!

6:00pm To the Akasha spa when we get back to the hotel – we feel like we are getting dangerously used to having these incredible massages on tap!

7:30pm A gin and tonic in Tunes Bar at the hotel - where better to have a G&T than in Holland where gin was invented. The bar has an enormous selection and some very talented bartenders, who knew they could put samphire in a cocktail and it would work?! And of course, the cool crowd seem to have made this place their home...



Rijksmuseum Research Library / Museumstraat, Amsterdam



Stedelijk museum logo / Amsterdam



View of a canal in Amsterdam



Van Gogh Museum / Museumplein, Amsterdam

8:00pm Dinner at Taiko, the hotel's fantastic Asian restaurant. As our waiter explains, the restaurant's chef Schilo is an Asian expert so we feel in good hands. We're big fans of Sushi back in New York so we're hard to please but it was amazing, King Crab sushi rolls! Definitely one for Instagram #weloveamsterdam #taikobyschilo #allthecrab #grandtourwiththeSethotels

Friday

10:30am A late start. In-room breakfast as we are busy packing, shakshuka today – perfect to set us up for our travelling day ahead.

12:00pm Marco is here to pick us up again, a few hours early for our flight back home but on the way to the airport we are visiting the ultimate selfie-spot – the tulip fields at Keukenhof gardens. We are shown where they grow the beautiful Orange Conservatorium tulip (we've never stayed in a hotel that had its own flower before!) and are able to get some gorgeous pictures, sadly the last upload of the trip. #tulipfever #weloveEurope #grandtourwiththeSethotels

5:15pm It's time to take off, so many memories, thank you Set Hotels, we've seen so much in so little time, and learnt so much. We will be back!

DISCOVERING THE SECRETS