

Oui, Flea!

Designer Lisa Henderson schools us on how to shop the Paris flea markets.

by LYDIA BROOKS



Dallas-based interior designer **Lisa Henderson** describes her style as “not-your-grandmother’s traditional.” The Houston native honed her fresh, comfortable, and colorful aesthetic during the five years she spent working under renowned designer Cathy Kincaid, eventually starting her own firm in 2010. A big part of Henderson’s playbook is her use of French antiques, which she first fell in love with in 2013. “I was part of a French cookbook club, and the woman who ran it planned different trips to France,” she says. “She happened to be taking one to Paris to shop the flea market, and I just had to go!” And so began her passion for shopping the *Marché aux Puces de Saint-Ouen*. Now making the trek overseas as often as she can, Henderson scores many a find at the Parisian market. “Not only can you find amazing antiques, but it’s the experience that makes it special,” she says. “It’s fun to bring back pieces along with the story of how you found them.”



◀ DESIGNER LISA HENDERSON

French Tips

The *Marché aux Puces de Saint-Ouen* can be intimidating for first-timers. Here’s what Henderson says you need to know.

DON'T GO ALONE (AT LEAST AT FIRST).

“The flea market is so big, and there’s a lot to navigate,” says Henderson. “It’s best if you can go for the first time with someone who’s gone before and can show you their go-to spots.”

STAY AWAY FROM STEREOTYPES.

“French people are actually kind and helpful, as long as you’re polite and don’t act brash like they think Americans do,” she says. “It is seen as rude if you don’t immediately make eye contact with the shop owner and greet them.”

TAKE YOUR TIME.

“If you’re going to the flea market to really shop, you probably want to give it a full day,” she says. “You never know what you’ll find if you take the time to dig.”

STRIKE A DEAL.

“There’s a lot of bargaining involved in shopping at the market,” she says. “So make sure you’re comfortable conversing politely with the shop owners.” And not to worry if your French isn’t up to snuff—Henderson says the majority of the vendors speak English.

SKIP THE METRO.

“The market is situated within a neighborhood, so the nearest Metro stop isn’t nearby,” she says. “Take an Uber or taxi instead, as they will drop you off closer to where you want to be.”

DON'T SWEAT THE TRANSPORT.

To get your purchased goods home, Henderson advises, “There are shipping offices located within the markets. And you can always take items to FedEx Paris!”

Marché aux Puces de Saint-Ouen is the overarching name for the flea market, which encompasses more than 2,500 sellers grouped into 14 smaller markets over a span of 17.3 acres. It is open on Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays. “The sellers tend to take the week off to shop for their stores,” says Henderson. pucesdeparissaintouen.com

On the Itinerary

Henderson shares the other places on her must-visit list.

STAY

Hôtel Duc de Saint-Simon

“My favorite,” Henderson says. “The staff is wonderful, and the location can’t be beat—it’s nestled right in the heart of the Saint Germain.”

Cheval Blanc Paris

“This is a newer hotel that’s great to stay at,” says Henderson. “The interiors were completed by Peter Marino, and the sunset views over the city are spectacular.”

EAT

Fontaine de Mars

“Think charming red-and-white checkered tablecloths,” Henderson says. “The haystack dessert—reminiscent of Monet’s haystack series—is a must!”

Loulou

Lunch in the Louvre gardens at Loulou is a can’t-miss on good-weather days, according to Henderson. “I love the idyllic atmosphere,” she says. “I could go to Loulou every day for lunch.”

DO

Left Bank antique shops

While Henderson shops mostly at the flea market, she can’t resist a peek at the designer antique shops on the Left Bank. “These are great for shopping for a curated, elevated selection of fine antiques,” she says.

Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte

Henderson advises skipping the Château de Versailles in favor of the Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte in Maincy. “The Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte was a precursor to the palace at Versailles,” she says. “The same team of architects, builders, and landscape designers was commissioned by the king to build Versailles.”



One of Henderson’s favorite things to source from the *Marché aux Puces de Saint-Ouen* is 18th- and 19th-century furniture as well as 19th- and 20th-century art, like this Parisian scene she chose for a client’s living room.



COURTESY

