

# LUSO

UNNECESSARY THINGS  
ARE OUR ONLY NECESSITIES

ISSUE 39



## SNAIL TRAIL

L'ESCARGOT'S MAJOR  
DOMO STOPS TO  
CHAT A WHILE

## ROAD RIVALS

LUSO'S TYRE-BURNING  
EXPLOITS FINALLY HIT YOUR  
TV SCREEN

## HEY JO

SOUTH AFRICA'S OWN  
DETROIT IS CLIMBING OUT  
INTO THE SUNSHINE



# PARISIAN INN COGNITO

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Richard Mellor visits a new boutique lodging that not only can be discreet, but is also devoted to the art of keeping schtum

Rendez-vous des Amis

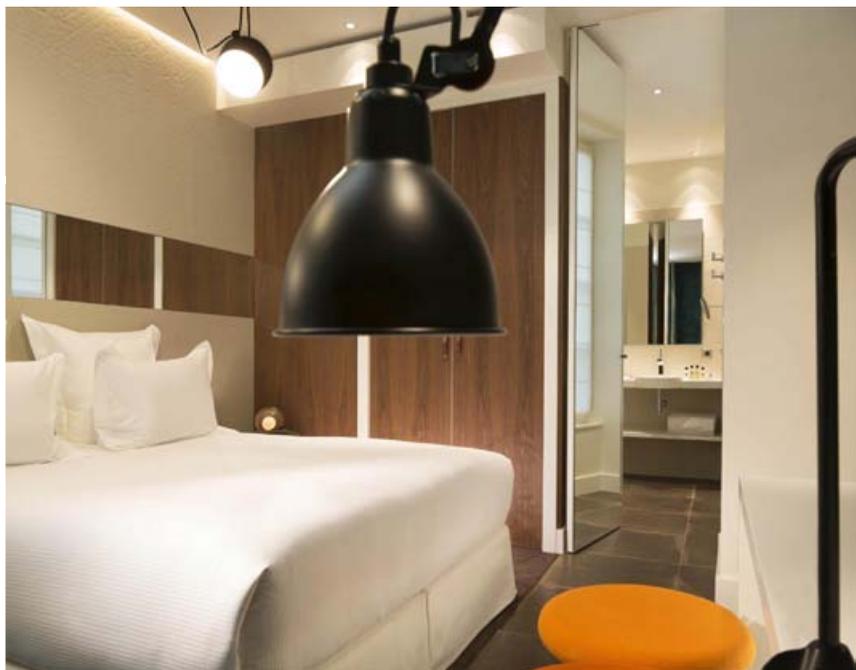
PL. J.  
RUE  
DES  
COURMAYEURS



**Saint Léger Léger.** John Doe. Alan Smith-ee. Lord R'Hoone. These colourful people have two things in common: they don't exist, their names being pseudonyms adopted by celebrities across the ages, and they're all rooms at Paris's new Hotel Dupond-Smith.

Such nomenclature underscores what this Marais boutique is all about: anonymity. In an era when glitzy, headline-grabbing Paris hotels are opening Left Bank, Right Bank and Centre – La Reserve, the rejuvenated Ritz, Peninsula Paris – the Dupond-Smith has stealthily arrived with barely a review line in anger. And that's just the way it wants things.

For this is an obsessively secretive residence: a place about which true luxury connoisseurs keep smugly schtum; a place that somehow manages to stand out from the crowd despite never drawing any attention to itself. It's also an establishment that you either look for, or unwittingly miss. In keeping with the incognito approach, there's scarcely any frontage, while rue des Guillemites is a backstreet trodden by few. So it continues inside: beside a token – albeit very comfortable – lobby lounge, there are no common areas. Guests instead tend to stay squirreled away in their quarters: taking breakfast (three options from 'Tonic' at €12 to 'Phlegmatic' for €22) there, using the free wi-fi at artisan desks there, sipping glasses of provided 2009 Château de Pez there, booking massages or personal-trainer sessions there.



Such seclusion is only possible thanks to the chambers' size and unshowy comfort – even the smallest-category Alias Rooms are unusually spacious for Paris hotels. Designed by rising architect duo Anne Peyroux and Emmanuèle Thisy across four floors, the five rooms and three suites all contain designer furniture with tasteful colour splashes, pretty, low-hanging lights, fine wall prints and arcing layouts. More prosaically, all boast iPod docks, queen-size beds and large bathrooms with rainfall showers, too.

Among the pair of Aliases (beginning at €380), try for 'Joseph L'Estrange' –

Prosper Mérimée's fictitious translator – as it has the boon of a small balcony facing the rooftops. The other, 'Alan Smithee' (a pen-name for film directors who have disowned an unloved production), offers disabled access. Of the larger Incognito Rooms (€520), 'Lord R'Hoone' (an anagram with which Honoré de Balzac signed works) also has a balcony, while 'Monsieur Mojo Risin' (aka Jim Morrison) has musical nods and emerald-hued glamour in a nod to the Doors frontman. The trio of Intuitu Suites (€740) afford bathtubs too, and separate their bedroom and lounge areas via sliding, mirrored doors. The best



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is the corner-side ‘Saint-Léger Léger’ (an assumed name of poet and diplomat Saint-John Perse), as it comes with access to a small, private courtyard.

Beyond secrecy and style, the Dupond-Smith’s appeal lies in two other areas. First, the service is outstanding: hushed, multilingual staff who’ll fulfil any request with genuine smiles, and yet who are never overbearing. It’s a fine balance which few hotels strike so well. Then there’s the location. Doubling as its Jewish quarter, the Marais has long become Paris’s most desirable area: a murmurous, villagey warren of narrow, often car-free streets hiding poky fash-

ion boutiques, dance schools, contemporary galleries and 17th-century hôtel particuliers (private mansions), one of which the Dupond-Smith occupies.

Sights include BHV/Marais – an ancient, eclectic department store crowned by Le Perchoir’s rooftop bar – and the revamped Musée Picasso. To the north are the trendy 10th and 11th arrondissements. Just west, Le Centre Pompidou, and then the Louvre. A short walk south and you’re crossing the Seine beside Notre-Dame. In short, there’s enticement all around. But we’ll understand if you’d prefer just to lie low. ●