



Travel

Where a votre sante meets namaste: Wellness culture comes to Paris

By Sara Lieberman November 30



The workout studio-cafe hybrid Chez Simone holds that athleticism paired with avocado whole grain toasts with a side salad of chou kale, and maybe a detox cold press juice, is très trendy. (Edouard Nguyen)

From the back, she was all Parisian: messy blond hair, cap-sleeved white tee worn under a scooped-back baby-doll dress, chunky platform sandals paired with ankle socks and a powder-blue Versace satchel.

But instead of lighting a cigarette, she was carefully contemplating which 100-percent organic, plant-based, gluten-free, unpasteurized, zero-additive snack to order.

These days in Paris, wellness and cleansing is the new wine and cheese.

Leaving one's hotel or Airbnb dwelling wearing sneakers — whether for a picturesque run along the quai or to withstand hours at the Louvre — is finally a la mode, and vegetarians no longer have to go hungry while their carnivore friends eat the likes of foie gras and tete de veau.

Nowhere is this change more evident than at Wild & the Moon, a veggie-pushing haven in the Marais and the setting for the aforementioned scene. Tables are wooden.

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Lightbulbs descend from the ceiling. Ferns drape over ceramic pots. Reggae plays softly, interrupted only by the occasional rumbling of the blender making the likes of spirulina smoothies.

[In France's Dordogne region, a land of castles and caves calls for deep exploration]

Opened in February 2016, it quickly became the place for the healthy hipster set — both French and otherwise — to detox on juice, socialize among friends and “thrive on love and energize in sun rays,” as its website says.

“That French paradox of the Parisian girl who dresses all in black, eats everything, drinks, smokes and doesn’t exercise; that can be true of a few girls, but not for most of us,” says Victoire Louapre, an expat Parisian who writes about food in California. “Before, we were frowned upon if we went to the gym every day or practiced yoga and meditation.”



Wild & the Moon, which opened in February 2016, quickly became the place for the healthy hipster set — both French and otherwise. (Wild & The Moon)

Now, even hotels are making it their business to offer more than a basic fitness center with a few treadmills to both guests and locals.

On a recent Monday night, around 7 p.m., I was the only non-French adventurer sliding my hands into boxing gloves in the lower level of Hotel Parister, which opened in October in the 9th arrondissement. The words “Mind, Body, Soul” loom large on a wall at the far end of the cavernous room where CYD (Conquer Your Day), a grass-roots fitness phenomenon that started as a Facebook group, is heading up the hotel’s workout

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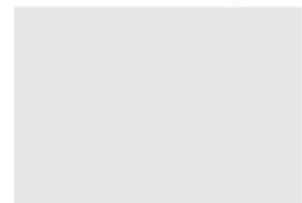
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program that is accessible to both Parisians and hotel visitors. About six classes are offered daily, including yoga, core strengthening, swimming and trigger point, a DIY targeted muscle massage.

“We believe in the benefits of practicing wellness on a regular basis,” says Grégory Mollet-Viéville, co-founder of CYD, who credits this increased interest in “bien-être” (well-being) to generational changes. “I’m 45, [and come from a time where] our parents told us to make some money. Today, I have two daughters, and I’d say, ‘Be happy,’ which is very different.”

Romain Rainaut, his business partner, adds: “You can take care of yourself without restricting yourself. The French don’t want to be told to stop doing something, but to change or add something — that can be okay.”

In “[The New Paris: The People, Places and Ideas Fueling a Movement](#),” which was published in April, author and journalist Lindsey Tramuta writes: “You can’t change their almost genetic predisposition to carbing, but Parisians are open to new things once they see they can be done well. The difference between the way in which Parisians now approach veggie-centric diets and the way most Americans do is that they come from an intrinsically more balanced background with food. It’s less radical (cut out everything!), more sound (give it a try; learn something new).”

[The childhood home of lauded author Colette is open to the public in this small French village]

To wit, before Kristen Beddard, author of “[Bonjour Kale](#),” reintroduced the farmers of France to the forgotten cabbage — which has become so globally popular that it is now featured in chip form at the London-based international sandwich shop Pret A Manger — they considered it a war food or something that they’d feed their livestock. But as a result of her efforts, the French started to appreciate the idea of making something old new again. For the first time in decades “chou kale,” as it’s affectionately known in France, appears on “eat smart” menus all around town — from Green House in the 11th

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arrondissement to the aptly named Miss Kale in the 2nd.



Something akin to a mantra looms large on a wall at the far end of the cavernous room where CYD (Conquer Your Day), a grass-roots fitness phenomenon that started as a Facebook group, is heading up the workout program at Hotel Panster. (Nicolas Mathews)

"People are finally understanding that health is linked to what you eat," says Emma Sawko, owner of Wild & the Moon, which debuted its third stand-alone outpost near the Palais Garnier in November. "This is pretty new here in Paris. Eating a lot of cheese and good wine is sort of our culture, but now we're all more informed. If I would've opened four or six years before, I'm not sure it would've worked the same way."

Julie Aubert, one of two 30-year-old co-founders of the year-old workout studio-cafe hybrid Chez Simone, also feels that she is on the forefront of a movement in which the French are following what the Americans, British and Australians have known for years: Athleticism paired with avocado whole-grain toasts, with a side salad of chou kale and maybe a detox cold press juice, is très trendy.

After my hour-long California barre class in the light-filled studio, I retreated to the locker room where, post-shower, I accidentally moisturized my body with makeup remover. I suppose I was just shocked that either one was available for free use — and from a chic brand like Fresh, no less! Once I was properly primped, I gathered around the juice bar with fellow exercisers to discuss the merits of energy balls, which the house sells for one euro a pop.



"People are finally understanding that health is linked to what you eat," says Emma Sawko, owner of Wild & the Moon. "This is pretty new here in Paris." (Wild & The Moon)

"We're slow learners," says Aubert, "because we have a very rich culture related to food and are therefore more reluctant to open our minds, but it's coming slowly."

And, perhaps, literally, with Paris's first Bar a Meditation, a center-your-chakras center that opened last year to offer group and individual sessions. Unfortunately, I arrived a half-hour late for the afternoon group class and didn't feel up to the challenge of tuning out solo on a cushioned black ottoman in the basement area, which is open all day for drop-ins. The bar's location near department stores Galeries Lafayette and Printemps on the Right Bank, however, make it a perfect place for a pre- or post-shopping breather, so I'll definitely go back.

"There has always been an appreciation for a life balance in France," says yoga teacher Cole Zaccaria, a New Yorker who now teaches in Paris with CYD at Hotel Parister, "and we are now entering a time where this includes moments of staying present, slowing down and being mindful."

And maybe finding the City of Light within.

Lieberman is a writer based in Paris. Her website is saralieberman.com. Find her on Twitter and Instagram: [@saraglieberman](https://twitter.com/saraglieberman).

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IF YOU GO

Where to stay

Hotel Parister

19 Rue Saulnier

011-33-1-8050-9191

hotelparister.com

This centrally located 45-room hotel in the 9th arrondissement was created with the epicurean in mind. From the underground fitness center's sauna and pool to the rooms' tasteful decorations (think navy ombre-painted walls, and pink velvet pillows) as well as an inviting lobby, bar and restaurant, it's a communal hub for the cool and curious. Rooms from about \$300.

Where to eat

Wild & the Moon

55 Rue Charlot

011-33-1-8695-4046

wildandthemoon.com

The fashion set descend on this light-filled cafe with a plethora of potted succulents for all-natural food and drinks, such as the "Better than Botox" cold press for about \$6 or the "Spouted Buckwheat Granola" for about \$11.50.

Green House

22 Rue Crespin du Gast

011-33-9-8048-7947

This produce-focused establishment in the 11th arrondissement comes from Californian Kristin Frederick of [Le Camion qui fume](#) fame. Outside, herbs flourish in flower boxes; inside, dishes such as arepas are topped with avocado, and the iced black tea is infused with thyme and vanilla. Starters from about \$6, mains from about \$13.

Miss Kale

104 Rue Reaumur

011-33-1-4013-0861

There's more than just the obvious as this spot in the 2nd arrondissement, but the idea is still fresh and healthy. Case in point: the green bagel (poppy seed, really) with salmon for about \$14 or the healthy bowl with tricolor rice and heaps of veggies for about \$12.

What to do

Bar a Meditation

5 Rue Gaillon

011-33-1-4742-0000

barameditation.fr

Take time out to go within at this tri-level space for mindful meditation, where half-hour sessions start at about \$23. The two rooms, which are decorated in neutral tones with wooden accents, are spacious and calming.

Chez Simone

140 Rue de Rivoli

011-33-9-6741-0424

chezsimone.fr