

GAY & LESBIAN PARIS

top picks

- Centre Gai et Lesbien de Paris Île de France (p328)
- Villa Papillon (p326)
- Le Dépôt (p327)
- Le Cox (p327)
- 3W Kafé (p327)

GAY & LESBIAN PARIS

France is one of Europe's most liberal countries when it comes to homosexuality – in part because of the long French tradition of public tolerance towards groups of people who choose not to live by conventional social codes – and Paris is the epicentre.

While certainly not London, New York or even Berlin, the French capital is home to thriving gay and lesbian communities, and same-sex couples are a common sight on its streets, especially in the Marais district of the 4e. In 1999 the government enacted PACS (Pacte Civil de Solidarité) legislation, designed to give homosexual couples some of the legal protection (eg inheritance rights) it extends to married heterosexuals (though it falls well short of the laws since codified in Spain and the UK). In May 2001, Paris elected Bertrand Delanoë, a European capital's first openly gay mayor. He was returned to office for a second term in March 2008.

EATING

AUX TROIS ÉLÉPHANTS

Map pp82–3 Thai €€

☎ 01 42 33 53 64; 36 rue Tiquetonne, 2e; starters €7-12.50, mains €10-19.50; ☎ dinner to 11.30pm; M Étienne Marcel

In a street where each restaurant is more original than the next, 'At the Three Elephants' takes the tart. Customers – a very mixed bag – are plunged into a highly exotic world where the extravagant 'hostesses' are equal to the dishes on offer. The subtle flavours of the *yum plameuk* (squid salad) and the *homok pla* (steamed fish served in a banana leaf; €10) are both excellent choices.

VILLA PAPIILLON

Map pp82–3 Thai €€

☎ 01 42 21 44 83; 15 rue Tiquetonne, 2e; starters €7-9.50, mains €13-20; ☎ dinner to 11pm Mon-Fri, to 11.30pm Sat & Sun; M Étienne Marcel

Offering Aux Trois Éléphants (see above) some very stiff competition is this new and relatively authentic Thai eatery just across rue Tiquetonne. Try the duck with Thai basil and the prawns cooked in Musulman-style curry. Lovely staff.

LE GAI MOULIN

Map pp98–9 French €€

☎ 01 48 87 06 00; www.le-gai-moulin.com, in French; 10 rue St-Merri, 4e; menus €12.90-20.90; ☎ dinner till midnight daily; M Rambuteau

The much expanded 'Gay Mill' (we don't get it either – unless they mean 'rumours') serves 'classic but honest' French cuisine, including decently priced set menus, to a mainly (but not exclusively) gay clientele. With the tables this close, there's no chance of not making a friend or two between (or

even during) courses. We love the piano bar downstairs on Tuesday evenings.

DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE

The Marais (4e), especially those areas around the intersection of rue Ste-Croix de la Bretonnerie and rue des Archives, and eastwards to rue Vieille du Temple, has been Paris' main centre of gay nightlife for over two decades. There are also a few bars and clubs within walking distance of blvd de Sébastopol. Other venues are scattered throughout the city.

The lesbian scene here is much less public than its gay counterpart, and centres around a few cafés and bars in the Marais.

In Paris, the need for exclusiveness appears to be relaxing – as is the general public's mentality towards homosexuality. Clubs are generally all gay friendly, while specifically gay venues are increasingly mixing things up – becoming some of the coolest spots in Paris. The bars and clubs listed here are almost exclusively gay or lesbian. For mixed clubs, see the Nightlife & the Arts chapter (p302).

LOUVRE & LES HALLES

LE TROISIÈME LIEU

Map p86 Bar

☎ 01 48 04 85 64; 62 rue Quincampoix, 4e; ☎ 6pm-2am Tue-Sun; M Rambuteau

This friendly bar is a popular place for chic young lesbians and, at times, for everyone else. There's a large, colourful bar and big wooden tables at street level, with good-value canteen meals. The vaulted cellar below leaves space for dancing to DJs, rock/alternative music concerts and live singers. On the last Saturday of the month it opens at 2pm.

MARAIS & BASTILLE

3W KAFÉ

Map pp98–9 Bar

☎ 01 48 87 39 26; www.3w-kafe.com, in French; 8 rue des Écouffes, 4e; ☎ 5.30pm-2am; M St-Paul

This glossy lesbian cocktail bar is the flagship venue on a street with several dyke bars. It's relaxed and elegant and there's no ban on men. If you're looking for something a bit more hardcore and 'exclusive', head for the 3W's sister-bar *Les Jacasses* (Map pp98–9; ☎ 01 42 71 15 51; 5 rue des Écouffes, 4e; ☎ 5pm-2am Tue-Sun; M St-Paul) just opposite.

INTERFACE BAR

Map pp94–5 Bar

☎ 01 47 00 67 15; 34 rue Keller, 11e; ☎ 3pm-2am; M Ledru Rollin

No, not 'In yer face'... This is a laid-back gay bar that attracts locals and habitués of the nearby *Gay & Lesbian Centre* (p328). Unusually for a gay bar in Paris, it attracts customers in the afternoon and early evening, especially during happy hour (6pm to 9pm).

LE COX

Map pp98–9 Bar

☎ 01 42 72 08 00; www.cox.fr, in French; 15 rue des Archives, 4e; ☎ noon-2am Mon-Fri, 1pm-2am Sat & Sun; M Hôtel de Ville

This small gay bar has become the meeting place for an interesting (and maybe interested) and cruisy crowd throughout the evening from 6pm. OK, we don't like the in-your-face name either, but what's a boy to do? Happy hour is 6pm to 9pm daily and the décor – be it a farm, be it a casino, be it a rodeo – changes every quarter.

LE QUETZAL

Map pp98–9 Bar

☎ 01 48 87 99 07; 10 rue de la Verrerie, 4e; ☎ 5pm-5am; M Hôtel de Ville

This perennial favourite gay bar – one of the first in the Marais – is opposite rue des Mauvais Garçons (Bad Boys' Street), a road named after the brigands who congregated here in 1540. It's always busy, with house and dance music playing at night, and cruisy at all hours. During happy hour (5pm to 9pm) a pint costs €3.60.

LE SCARRON

Map pp98–9 Bar

☎ 01 42 77 44 05; www.lescarron.com, in French; 3 rue Geoffroy l'Angevin, 4e; ☎ 10pm-6am Wed-Sat; M Rambuteau

This rather chic *bar de nuit* (night bar) hots up as the evening progresses, especially in the

vaulted basement. There's a rather subdued piano bar on the ground floor much more suited (key word) to quiet conversation.

AMNÉSIA

Map pp98–9 Bar-Café

☎ 01 42 72 16 94; 42 rue Vieille du Temple, 4e; ☎ 11am-2am; M Hôtel de Ville

In the heart of the Marais, cosy, warmly lit Amnésia is an institution not easy to forget. Friendly and stylish, it remains resolutely popular with gay guys but is more mixed than many of its counterparts. There's an attractive lounge area upstairs and a tiny dance floor in the *cave* (wine cellar) downstairs with DJ music from the 1980s and 90s.

LITTLE CAFÉ

Map pp98–9 Bar-Café

☎ 01 48 87 43 36; 62 rue du Roi de Sicile, 4e; ☎ 10am-2am; M St-Paul

Run by some of the eminent ladies from the much missed lesbian club Le Pulp on the Grands Boulevards, this modern wine bar-café is a new local favourite, with great coffee and meals. The clientele is relaxed, mixed and street smart, with a penchant for electronic music and good wine.

L'OPEN CAFÉ

Map pp98–9 Bar-Café

☎ 01 42 72 26 18; www.opencafe.fr; 17 rue des Archives, 4e; ☎ 11am-2am Sun-Thu, 11am-4am Fri & Sat; M Hôtel de Ville

Until recently this Marais institution was the place for gay men of all ages to head after work, but the action seems to have shifted a few doors southwards to the *Cox bar* (left). Still, L'Open's large terrace and daytime schedule are drawing cards, as is the four-hour happy 'hour' starting at 6pm.

NYX

Map pp98–9 Bar-Café

☎ 01 42 78 71 55; 30 rue du Roi de Sicile, 4e; ☎ 5pm-2am Sun-Thu, 5pm-4am Fri & Sat; M St-Paul

This lesbian café and lounge bar at the corner of rue des Écouffes (in what was once a *boulangerie-pâtisserie*) has a stylish vibe and an upbeat crowd. There's a DJ club downstairs that operates on Friday and Saturday nights.

LE DÉPÔT

Map p86 Club

☎ 01 44 54 96 96; www.ledepot.com, in French; 10 rue aux Ours, 3e; admission €8.50-12.50; ☎ 2pm-8am; M Rambuteau or Étienne Marcel

With a cop shop just next door you'd think this strictly men-only bar and club over

three floors would be a titch more subdued. Fat (actually, rather buffed) chance. It proudly waves its gay flag just metres from the red, white and blue ones of the *commissariat* (police station) and is perhaps just as much of an institution. It's a major men's pick-up joint, with theme nights, DJs and notorious backrooms.

RAIDD BAR Map pp98–9 Club

☎ 01 42 77 05 13; www.raiddbar.com; 23 rue du Temple, 4e; ☎ 5.30pm–5am; 📄 Hôtel de Ville This is a club-bar that takes its cue from Splash in New York, with showering go-go boys behind glass and a terrace on which to cool off. It's a pretty attitude-y place and the drinks aren't cheap, but that's New York for you. Happy hour daily 5pm to 10pm.

TANGO Map pp92–3 Club

☎ 01 42 72 17 78; www.boite-a-frissons.fr; 13 rue au Maire, 3e; admission €7; ☎ 10.30pm–5am Fri & Sat, 6pm–midnight; 📄 Arts et Métiers Billing itself as a *boîte à frissons* (quivering club), Au Tango brings in a mixed and cosmopolitan gay and lesbian crowd. Housed in a historic 1930s dancehall, its atmosphere and style is retro and festive. Dancing gets going when it opens at 10.30pm with waltzing, salsa and tango. From about 12.30am onwards DJs play. Sunday's gay tea dance is legendary.

SLEEPING

HÔTEL CENTRAL MARAIS

Map pp98–9 Hotel

☎ 01 48 87 56 08; www.hotelcentralmarais.com; 2 rue Ste-Croix de la Bretonnerie, 4e; s & d from €89, tr €109; 📄 Hôtel de Ville; 📄

This small hotel in the centre of gay Paris caters essentially for gay men, though lesbians are also welcome. It's in a lovely 17th-century building and its seven rooms are spread over several floors; there is no lift. Also, there is only one bathroom for every two rooms, though the room on the 5th floor has an en suite bathroom and toilet. Reception, which is on the 1st floor, is open from 8am to 5pm; after that check in around the corner at [Le Central Bar](#) ([Map pp98–9](#); ☎ 01 48 87 99 33; 33 rue Vieille du Temple, 4e; ☎ 4pm–2am Mon–Fri, 2pm–2am Sat & Sun; 📄 Hôtel de Ville), which is the oldest (in every sense) gay bar still open in Paris.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Most of France's major gay organisations are based in Paris. If you require a more complete list than we are able to provide here, pick up a copy of *Genres*, an almost-annual listing of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual organisations, at the Centre Gai et Lesbien de Paris Île de France ([below](#)) or consult [Le Petit Futé Paris Gay et Lesbien](#) guide ([opposite](#)).

Act Up Paris (☎ 01 48 06 13 89; www.actupparis.org, in French) Meetings open to the public are held every Tuesday at 7.30pm at the [École des Beaux-Arts](#) ([Map pp128–9](#); Amphithéâtre des Loges, 14 rue Bonaparte, 6e; 📄 St-Germain des Prés).

Association des Médecins Gais (AMG; ☎ 01 48 05 81 71; www.medecins-gays.org, in French) The Association of Gay Doctors deals with gay-related health issues. Telephone advice on physical-health issues is available from 6pm to 8pm on Wednesday and 2pm to 4pm on Saturday. For counselling, call between 8.30pm and 10.30pm Thursday.

Centre Gai et Lesbien de Paris Île de France (CGL; [Map pp92–3](#); ☎ 01 43 57 21 47; www.cgiparis.org, in French; 63 rue Beaubourg, 3e; ☎ 6–8pm Mon, 3–8pm Tue & Thu, 12.30–8pm Wed, Fri & Sat, 4–8pm Sun; 📄 Rambuteau or Arts et Métiers) The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual Centre, now in spanking-new premises just north of the Centre Pompidou, is your single best source of information in Paris. The large library of gay books and periodicals is open from 3pm to 8pm on Wednesday and 3pm to 6pm on Friday.

Écoute Gaie (☎ 0 810 811 057; www.france.qrd.org/assocs/ecoute-gaie, in French; ☎ 6–10pm Mon–Fri) Established in 1982, this is the oldest hotline for gays and lesbians in Paris.

SOS Homophobie (☎ 0 810 108 135, 01 48 06 42 41; www.sos-homophobie.org; ☎ 6–10pm Mon, Fri & Sun, 8–10pm Tue–Thu, 2–4pm Sat) This hotline takes anonymous calls concerning discriminatory acts against gays and lesbians.

Of gay and lesbian publications, *Têtu* (www.tetu.com, in French; €5) is a popular and widely circulating glossy monthly available at newsstands everywhere. Be on the lookout for bimonthly freebies like *2X* (www.2xparis.fr) and *Mâles-a-Bars* (www.males-a-bars.com, in French), which have interviews and articles (in French) and listings of gay clubs, bars, associations and personal classifieds. You'll find them stacked up at most gay venues. The monthly magazine *Lesbia* (€4.10), established almost 20 years ago, looks at lesbian women's issues and gives a rundown of

what's happening around the country. Also for women, *La Dixième Muse* (The 10th Muse; www.ladixiememuse.com, in French; €4.20) is more culturally oriented.

The following guidebooks list pubs, restaurants, clubs, beaches, saunas, sex shops and cruising areas; they are available from Les Mots à la Bouche bookshop ([p201](#)).

Dyke Guide: Le Guide Lesbien (www.dykeguide.com, in French; €13;) The essential French-language guide for girls on the go in France and Paris.

Le Petit Futé Paris Gay et Lesbien (www.petitfute.com, in French; €14) A French-language guide that goes well beyond pursuits hedonistic, with political, cultural, religious and health listings along with bars and restaurants. Highly recommended.

Paris Gayment (www.parigramme.com, in French; €6) A French-language, 110-page sourcebook from the ones behind *Paris Est à Nous* pocket books about various aspects of life in the French capital and contains just about every

address of interest to 'girls who love girls and boys who love boys and their friends'.

Spartacus International Gay Guide (www.spartacusworld.com; €28.95) A male-only guide to just about every country in the world, with more than 80 pages devoted to France, half of which cover Paris.

Among some of the better gay and lesbian websites include:

Dyke Planet (www.dykeplanet.com, in French) The best French-language website for gay women.

Gay France (www.gayfrance.fr, in French) Lots and lots of male-to-male chat and classifieds.

La France Gaie & Lesbienne (www.france.qrd.org, in French) 'Queer resources directory' for gays and lesbians.

Le Gay Paris (www.legayparis.fr) Not unlike Paris Gay ([see below](#)) but slightly more up to date.

Paris Gay (www.paris-gay.com) Decent overview of what's up and what's on in the French capital.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'