



Floral voyage

By Saxon Henry

Three Paris hotels offer distinctive floral artistry within their confines

A stroll along Paris' famed boulevards offers glimpses of fresh flowers – pert nosegays placed festively on café tables and florists brimming with the most luscious bloomed offerings you'll find anywhere in the world. But the city's iconic hotels, with their marble-clad lobbies and trompe l'oeil staircases, hold the most effusive flowering artistry in the city.

Four Seasons Hôtel George V

It is within one of these graceful backdrops that Jeff Leatham works his magic – managing a staff of 12 at the Four Seasons Hôtel George V as he designs and creates lavish blooming compositions for the property's public spaces, and bonny bouquets for the hotel's tastefully appointed rooms. Leatham was first smitten with the Parisians' love of flowers when he visited the City of Light in 1995, a flourishing romance that continues to this day. With two books to his credit, the Utah native brings vignettes with everything from majestic calla lilies to sexy beds of tulips to luxurious life.

The artistry he employs is astounding, and his building blocks include masterful outside-the-box elements – like dark purple calla lilies tethered on black silk ribbons that hang upside down above lit votives, the heat from the flames causing the blooms to sway suggestively; and fountains of chartreuse hydrangeas bursting from tall cylinders, some crystal clear and others hiding stems behind glints of glass.

Shangri-La

Hydrangeas are holding court in other princely properties, including the newly opened Shangri-La on the Avenue d'Iéna. L'Atelier Pascal Mutel creates the blossoming arrangements within the estate once owned by Napoleon Bonaparte's grandnephew Roland Bonaparte. The influence of the elite collector – a devotee of everything botanical – is evident in the floral-themed stained glass windows and lush murals dotting the refined interiors. At one time, Bonaparte owned a collection of 2.5 million specimens and a library of 200,000 books.

This page The Eiffel Suite at the Plaza Athénée (left), the Shangri-La (right) and La Bauhinia restaurant at the Shangri-La (bottom)
 Opposite page The lobby at the Four Seasons Hôtel George V



The hotel's mix of flowers includes delicate orchids, many of which have their feet sunk in planters reflecting the Empire period in which the property was built. Shangri-La's main restaurant, La Bauhinia, is aptly named after a family of orchids that proliferates in Hong Kong – a nod to the brand's Asian roots.

Hôtel Plaza Athénée

The signature flower at the Hôtel Plaza Athénée, one of the Dorchester Collection's luxury properties, is the red Geranium because the flower's gaiety, like the palatial property's sophisticated red awnings, serves as a beacon to weary shoppers who flock to the famed haute-couture thoroughfare of Avenue Montaigne. Modeled after Parisian apartments, the property's suites hold artful arrangements, and the public spaces are awash in color during the height of the spring and summer seasons. La Cour Jardin, the hotel's delightful courtyard, holds alfresco dining during the summer months, the infusion of ivy dripping from the stone façade and the statuesque evergreens in elegant planters creating a riotous backdrop for bursts of color.

The person who coined the phrase, "Bloom where you are planted," must have been basking in a profusion of petals in one of these Parisian palaces.

