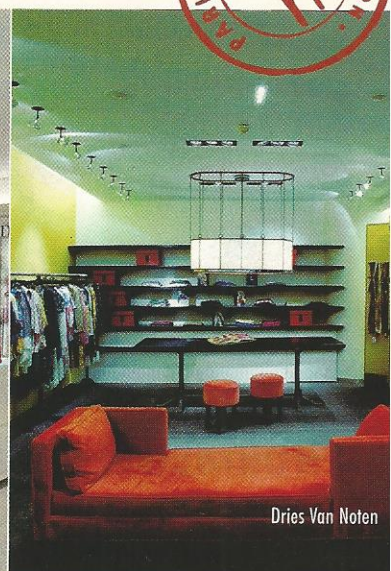


Chloé Shoe floor at Printemps Paris



Printemps du Luxe



Dries Van Noten

IMAGINE YOUR BOSS SAYING, "YOUR MISSION, SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT, IS TO FLY TO PARIS – FRANCE (NOT TEXAS!) TO EXPLORE AN ÜBER-CHIC DEPARTMENT STORE. OH, AND WE'LL THROW IN A HANDSOME HUNK, TOO."

Of course, you'd do just what I did: Grab your passport and run to the airport before she realized she could've gone instead! **Jet lag, what jet lag? Good bubbly cures that.** And if I was feeling woozy, it was more likely the beefcake, but we'll get to him later . . . My mission: to explore Printemps – French for spring – the forgotten "grand magasin" (department store) next to fashion giant Galeries Lafayette on Boulevard Haussmann.

When Printemps opened in 1865, it was the only Parisian building with electricity. A decade later, it was the first department store with an elevator. **Now, thanks to a new CEO and new attitude, the slumbering sister has become branché (super hip) again.** Taking an American approach to retail, Printemps transformed itself from faded and dark to airy and bright. Add to that online shopping (printemps.com/international) and personal shoppers (a rarity in France) who speak 12 languages combined. "Everything has to be on trend and luxurious," says Eva Glélé, spokesperson for Printemps.

### NO KIDDING.

The elite floor has its own escalator, which deposits you in heaven (i.e., your accountant's hell). We're talking Dior, Prada, Bottega Veneta, Lanvin and France's only DeBeers. **Like Marie Antoinette, you're plied with caviar, champagne and Ladurée's melt-in-your-mouth macaroons – and before spending a single Euro!** A few sips, a few bites and suddenly, the 10-carat DeBeers solitaire that's so flawless it glitters in the dark seems affordable at \$4 million (*Honeeeey, please*).

A concierge also delivers your dreams (for a fee, natch). Want designer Inès de la Fressange as your personal shopper? Done. A suite from the Hôtel Bristol recreated on the rooftop terrace so you can sleep under the stars without forsaking 600-thread sheets? Done. Convince your beau that \$4 million is a bargain for a bauble? Get real.

**OUR HEAVEN, OF COURSE, IS THE SHOE FLOOR, EUROPE'S LARGEST, AT 9,842 SQUARE FEET, WITH 70 BRANDS.**

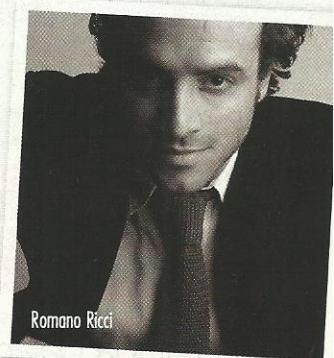
For solemates, that's Robert Clergerie, Roger Vivier and Giorgio Armani. Such sandals need a worthy ensemble from fashion-forward Alexander McQueen, Ann Demeulemeester, Burberry Prorsum and Dries Van Noten. And beneath it all, you've got to have the world's most luscious lingerie, located in the basement. And yes, they're selling sex toys alongside Agent Provocateur lingerie.

### PROVOCATIVE INDEED.

What goes best with a new wardrobe? A makeover, naturally! The Printemps Coiff'Bar cuts, styles and extends hair; Anastasia Brow Studio grooms facial caterpillars; and Mavala pedicure bar revives tootsies. Should those credit-card carting fingers fail, revive them with a hand massage with La Prairie's caviar skincare cream. Then again, a renewed purpose can be costly: two floors hold 250 brands of makeup, skin and hair care from Chanel, Payot, By Terry and Leonor Greyl.

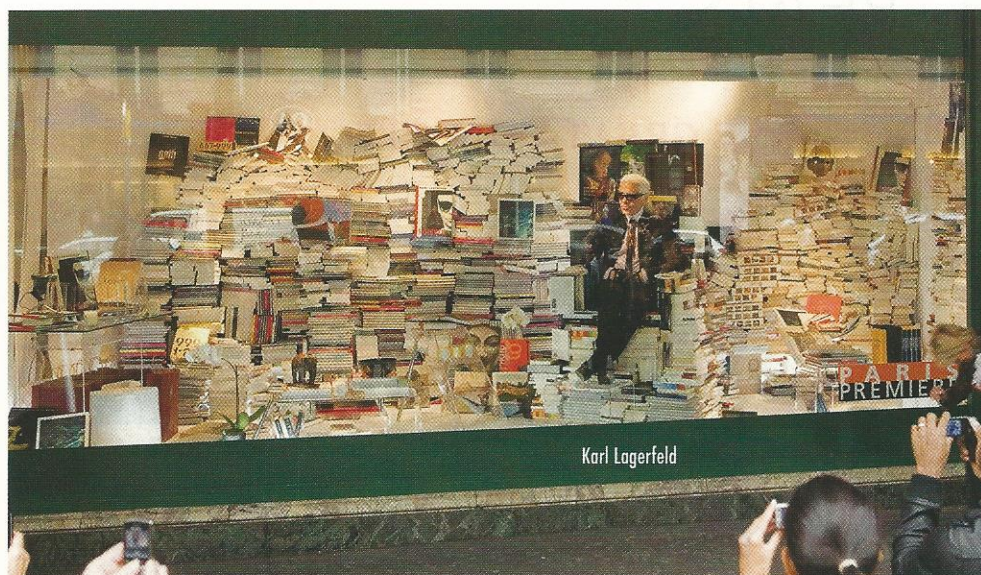
Fate delivered us from that temptation in the form of a debonaire dude in fragrance. With his Al Pacino eyes and rakish fedora, he seemed a movie star. Close.

**Romano Ricci is the great-grandson to couturier Nina Ricci and heir to L'air du Temps.** One of Paris' biggest Romeos, he's launched his own fragrance line, *Juliette Has a Gun*, "a weapon of seduction." "Women are my inspiration," says the playboy parfumeur. Was that a wink – or my wicked imagination? Oh, dear.



Romano Ricci





Overwhelmed? Join the club. Two more buildings await: the men's store (seven floors) and home furnishings (nine floors). Reaching them can be slow; 60,000 spectators pass Printemps' windows daily, and who can blame them?

Last year, the store asked a dozen top designers not only to create a window, but appear in it. Live. For hours. Starting with Karl Lagerfeld. **THE SEP-TUAGENARIAN CREATOR OF CHANEL, LAGERFELD AND FENDI COLLECTIONS FILLED HIS WINDOW WITH BOOKS, FORMING**

**A THRONE, FROM WHICH HE VOGUED** (like Madonna). French fave Isabel Marant and celeb-adored shoe designer Christian Louboutin also window-wowed. Others are rumored for fall, again live and on cable Channel Paris Première.

Printemps' riveting TV and subway ads include a collaboration of New York-based photographers and *Harper's Bazaar* contributors Stephen Gan and David Sims. They ignite a craving — to extend our trip. So much store, so little time.

## WHERE TO STAY, DREAM

SHOPPING CAN BE A HEADY EXPERIENCE, BUT SOONER OR LATER, YOU'VE GOT TO LAND. HERE ARE DOWN-TO-EARTH INSIDER TIPS:

- Show your passport at Printemps welcome desk (64, Boulevard Haussmann, 01 42 82 50 00) and receive 10 percent off for the day. And get the city's best view — free — from the ninth floor terrace at Printemps' home store.
- By government decree, department stores can slash prices only on set dates (seriously). Printemps' plummet 30-50 percent — even 80 percent — through July 29, then again in January.



- Where to stay? Most convenient is the Edouard VII, a veddy British hotel three blocks from Printemps ([edouard7hotel.com](http://edouard7hotel.com), starting at \$700). Steeped in sensuality is the updated Hôtel Balzac, near the Champs Elysée, with half-canopies and crystals dangling from velvet-striped shaded lamps ([hotelbalzac.com](http://hotelbalzac.com), starting at \$735). And if Paris doesn't count without a room flaunting the Eiffel Tower, check into the pricey Hôtel Fouquet's Barrière ([fouquets-barriere.com](http://fouquets-barriere.com), starting at \$1,070).