



A Broad Traveling Abroad

MY FIRST TRIP TO PARIS (France, not Texas) lead to an incredible discovery. Paris has three major food groups: caffeine, carbohydrates and chocolate. This off-beat pyramid appears to help keep Parisians looking svelte in their all black garb. But the question remains, how does this combination possibly work when each small corner bakery seems to be a part of a large neighborhood poem?

Ode to Sweets...windows display delicious pastries-a-plenty and chocolates galore that no man, donning a beret or a cowboy hat, could resist. Although the food choices seem categorically and calorically far less healthy than those in the states, Parisians do seem to have the skinny on being skinny.

The clocks in Paris seem to run a bit slower than at home. A million and one errands a day with a quick Starbucks fix is the American way. But Parisians ascribe to the opposite — a million and one espressos and a quick work fix. Parisians take their caffeine very seriously — as stated in most menus, there is no *au lait* allowed in coffee after breakfast. Locals will sit for hours at a time allowing schedules to fall to the wayside in exchange for a leisurely, albeit highly caffeinated respite at a corner café. This “slow as you go” mentality allows plenty of time for the caffeine to speed up an otherwise slow metabolism.

The recipe for an ideal Parisian diet is two parts cheese and 10 parts carbohydrates. Bread is as much a part of their day as avoiding it is for us. So why is it that baguette after baguette, the majority of Parisians manage to maintain

a healthy appearance? First of all, everything comes in smaller sizes. In fact, the only item offered in a size “L” is the wine. Not only are the portion sizes smaller, but even the plates, dishes and cups look like they could fit easily into a doll house.

Secondly, trips to the market are on a need-only basis. In lieu of buying in bulk (as we’ve been taught in America — home of the family-size/three for the price of five), meals are bought daily, both to preserve the freshness of the food and to keep it a little further from reach. On that note, aside from brown bagging it from the market, there is no “to-go” option. As far as I can tell, there is no French translation for the term “doggie bag.”

It’s also interesting that the exercise method in Paris is akin to that of New York; there’s no need to workout because you’re always on the move. Four wheels equals bad, two legs equals good. Whether you’re climbing the steps to the Metro, walking the length of the Louvre or dodging a runaway Vespa, your heart rate is constantly elevated. So much so that even the most decadent desserts and heaviest of creams have no time to settle onto your hips.

Regardless of these observational anecdotes and fascinating findings (even if I do say so myself), one thing’s for sure. A morning jog around Town Lake far surpasses the view from the underground Metro and I’d take a margarita from Maudie’s (size “L”) over a doll house espresso any day.