

**MALCOLM ROGERS** catches the train to Paris — the world's most visited city.

**N**OW that Paris is just over two hours from London, you'll be wanting to take in the sights of one of the most famous, most visited cities in the world. Paris is the most popular tourist destination in the world, with over 30million foreign visitors per year — they come to see the Champs-Élysées, the Cathedral Notre Dame de Paris, the Napoleonic Arc de Triomphe and of course the Louvre.

Some head for Pere Lachaise cemetery to pay homage to Chopin, Edith Piaf or Jim Morrison of the Doors.

The necropolis is also the last resting place of Oscar Wilde and his grave hasn't always enjoyed the best of fortunes.

The angel which Jacob Epstein carved for Oscar's headstone was only in place a matter of weeks when someone hacked the cherubic, er, appendage off. Fortunately a replacement has remained in place (or was present and correct when I was there).

Should it ever go missing again Oscar will undoubtedly sum it up in heaven: "To lose one penis can be regarded as a misfortune. But to lose two can be regarded as little short of carelessness."

Cuisine, champagne and Chablis are also very valid reasons for catching the 9.10 from St. Pancras to Gare du Nord.

But, I hear you ask, where will I sleep it all off?

Well, nowhere better than the Hotel des Academies in the bohemian quarter.

The area is famous for its cafes and restaurants, home to Parisian society's creative and intellectual elite.

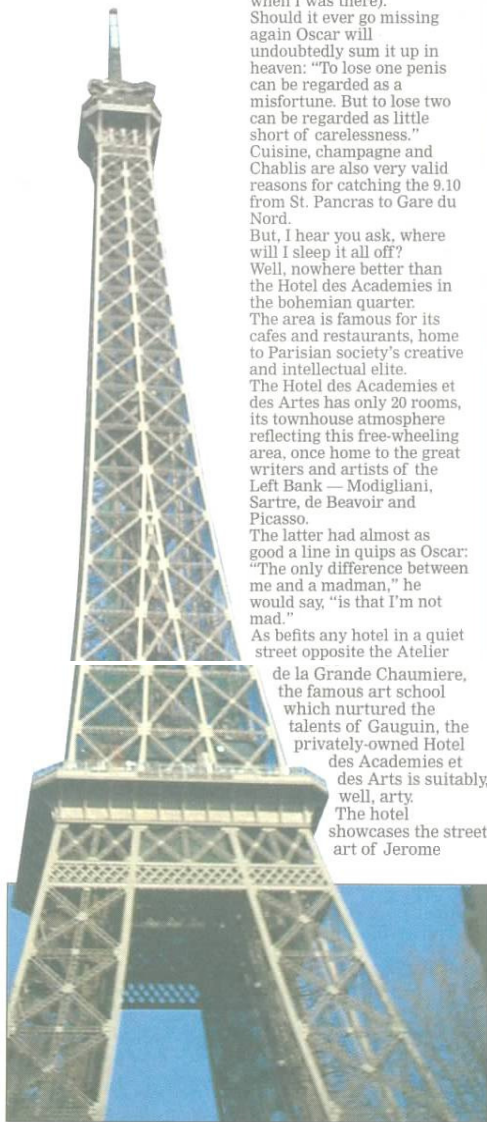
The Hotel des Academies et des Artes has only 20 rooms, its townhouse atmosphere reflecting this free-wheeling area, once home to the great writers and artists of the Left Bank — Modigliani, Sartre, de Beavoir and Picasso.

The latter had almost as good a line in quips as Oscar: "The only difference between me and a madman," he would say, "is that I'm not mad."

As befits any hotel in a quiet street opposite the Atelier

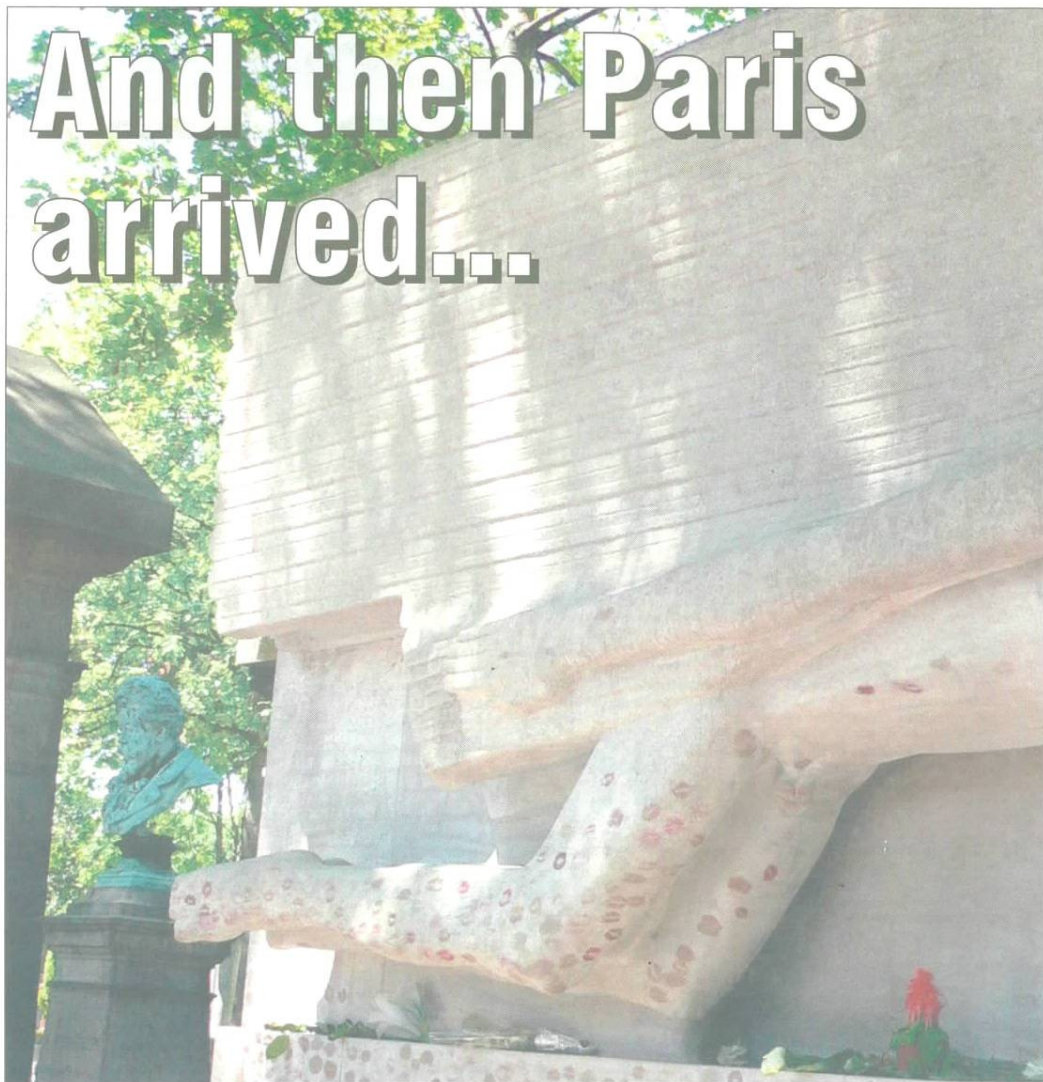
de la Grande Chaumiere, the famous art school which nurtured the talents of Gauguin, the privately-owned Hotel des Academies et des Artes is suitably well, arty.

The hotel showcases the street art of Jerome



■ **EIFFEL TOWER:** A far cry from Blackpool.

# And then Paris arrived...



■ **OSCAR WILDE'S GRAVE:** Currently everything is present and correct.

Mesnager — his distinctive art adorns the place. This is about as far as you can get from polystyrene hotels.

The only thing which looked out of place, I reflected as I looked round my immaculate quarters, was me.

The hotel's owners, Charlotte and Laurent Inchausse, soon put me at ease and explained how they've given each room its own artistic theme.

'Parisienne' with its sensual interiors in cream and taupe; 'Comedienne' with dramatic furnishings including chimney-red headboards in honour of the actresses who perform in the Montparnasse district; the 'Man Ray' rooms with black and white interiors which pay tribute to the famous photographer.

This was my room, a perfect place for louche behaviour.

In keeping with the artistic theme, bathrooms are separated from the bedrooms by theatre curtains and are splendidly appointed.

I always say, if your hotel bathroom isn't bigger and better than the one at home, then move.

No problem here — you'll be wanting to say oui, oui, oui immediately.

Rooms on the top floor feature high ceilings and romantic views over the rooftops of Paris.

Over The Rooftops Of Paris — that sounds like a song. But that's the sort of thing the Left Bank does to you. Hotel des Academies et des Artes is an ideal location from which to explore the boutiques and art galleries of

the Boulevard de Saint Germain.

The Luxembourg Gardens are a two-minute stroll away and the Metro station of Vavin, with routes across the Seine, is just around the corner.

And if you want to just sit in the hotel, well there's a library; a video art screening room and a little bistro.

You can just sit here, drink coffee or quaff brandy and tell the folks back home you really did visit the Mona Lisa.

Charlotte and Laurent are aware that there are bigger and grander hotels in Paris — but their personal touch, unique atmosphere and laid-back luxe makes this an ideal place to stay in the most visited city in the world.

Even if your own house or flat looks nothing like this, you'll still immediately feel at home.

■ **Double rooms begin at €210. Visit the website [hoteldesacademies.com](http://hoteldesacademies.com) For reservations e-mail: [reservation@hoteldesacademies.com](mailto:reservation@hoteldesacademies.com) or Tel +33 (0)1 43 26 66 44.**

**Directions: 20 minutes from Gare du Nord: Metro Number 4, direction Porte d'Orleans. Exit at station Vavin, turn left from Boulevard du Raspall into Rue de la Grande Chaumiere. Other metro stations within walking distance include Notre-Dame des Champs (3 minutes), Raspall (5 minutes) and Port Royal (6 minutes).**