

TAKE A WALK ON THE LEFT SIDE

As Jessica Sainsbury opens her new hotel on the Left Bank, she takes us on a tour of her favourite places in Paris



Jessica Sainsbury explains why she simply adores the *rive gauche*

BUT together a successful hotel chain and a multi-millionaire heiress, and a rather unpleasant vision of the brash Paris Hilton is conjured up. So when a heavily pregnant, fresh-faced and slightly shy woman approaches me, my very last thought is that this is Jessica Sainsbury, daughter of the former Conservative trade minister, Sir Timothy Sainsbury. We have arranged to go on a tour of her favourite shops in the Left Bank of Paris, an area she knows well. 'Peter and I got engaged in Paris, so we have a soft spot for it, and this bit is our favourite place.'

Jessica and her husband, Peter Frankopan, both in their mid-thirties, with a fourth baby on the way, established the successful Cowley Manor Hotel in Gloucestershire, and last July bought L'Hôtel in the Rue des Beaux Arts, enthralled by its *fin de siècle* interiors and roll-call of decadent guests (which has included pretty much everyone, from Oscar Wilde and Katherine Hepburn to Johnny Depp and Drew Barrymore). 'I always knew I wanted to start my own business, and I've always loved staying in hotels,' she says (surprisingly—her softly-spoken, courteous manner does not suggest someone who expects to be waited on hand and foot). Jessica's manner is unassuming but not ineffectual—you sense that she is a woman who knows her own mind. With her easy laugh and impressive energy (even at eight months pregnant), I find I am looking forward to a morning in her company.

Our first stop is Jacqueline Subra, on the Rue de Seine, a jeweller selling one of Jessica's favourite vintage designers, Line Vautrin. 'I did very well for Christmas presents out of my brothers when they didn't have girlfriends,' she laughs.

Close by, on the corner of Rue Jacques Callot, is La Palette, a bistro with, according to Jessica, an excellent *plat du jour*. On Rue de Buci, the Taschen bookshop is still closed. Jessica is just about to tell me about all the beautiful art books they sell there, when we are taken aback to see that the main display is of *The Playmate Book*. Moving swiftly on, we dive into the pretty, covered walkway of Cour de Commerce St André, which emerges on the wider boulevards of the Left Bank and leads us to our first pit stop, the bookshop and café Les Éditeurs (Saint Germain des Prés). Over a cooling citron-pressé, we admire the café's large chandelier and red velvet chairs as soothing music plays in the background.

Along the Rue de Condé,

Jessica reveals a love for the independent boutiques that Paris does so well. 'I find most of my clothes here. Back in London, friends will ask "Is it Prada?" No! It's usually very cheap, which is satisfying.' Next on the route is the Rue Saint-Sulpice, a key location in *The Da Vinci Code*.

Now the shops have opened, Jessica can't resist diving into Rue de Vieux Colombier's Hervé Chapelier, well-stocked with bags which

Jessica is considering bringing a darling garden sofa home on the Eurostar'

she admits to having bought as presents several times, both for friends and for herself. Next door is the boutique Zadig & Voltaire—a good example of the Parisian shops that manage to be both one-off and moderately priced.

On the nearby Rue de Rennes is a utilitarian-chic clothes shop for men, women and children that I can't see a name for, but whose labels carry the witty tag: 'Art is a

of Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir (the street itself has now been named after them).

We turn back down into the narrow streets and into another favourite shop, Upla, on Rue Saint Benoît. There is a wonderfully mad assortment of *objets*, from plastic piggy banks to a darling child's sofa for the garden, which she is contemplating going back for. 'It wouldn't be too hard to lug back, would it?' Jessica and Peter always travel by Eurostar to Paris as they do not like flying, 'and in my hectic life, it's a good chance to have a conversation and be able to sit down for two-and-a-half hours'.

Our grand finale is the very pretty Ladurée on Rue Bonaparte, with its famous macaroons—Jessica's preferred flavour is rose—and assistants in white polka-dotted aprons. 'In a world where we have too many things—edible souvenirs!' These are a few of Jessica's favourite things. 

JESSICA FELLOWES



Existential eaterie: one of Sartre's and de Beauvoir's favourite cafes