

In Paris, Eco-Friendly Brands Make a Style Statement

In an inherently expensive city, products made with protecting the environment in mind can be had for surprisingly reasonable prices.

By **Sophie Stuber**

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PARIS — Fashion is woven into the modern cultural identity of France’s capital, where tradition and innovation blend together to create some of today’s most recognized styles. As consumers become more conscientious about the origins of their clothing brands, shopping in the classically fashionable city is evolving.

The fashion industry produces 20 percent of the world’s water waste and 10 percent of global carbon emissions. In early 2019, the French government officials Frédéric Hocquard and Antoinette Guhl announced a five-year plan to move the city’s fashion industry toward more sustainable practices.

Across the globe, sustainability is already a trendy theme in the high fashion world. In short, it means producing goods in a way that protects the environment and the rights and health of workers. Fortunately for the everyday shopper, there is no need to sacrifice quality or style when seeking out environmentally friendly and ethically sourced clothing in Paris.

The best way to see Paris is on foot. To sample some of the eco-fashion boutiques in the city, head to the neighborhoods around the Canal St.-Martin. The tranquil waterway cuts through the city from north to south before emptying into the Seine, and the cobblestone banks lined with trees are the perfect place for an afternoon stroll between shops.

Three minutes from the canal on the Rue de Marseille is the Centre Commercial flagship store. Although this block is best known for the celebrated boulangerie Du Pain et des Idées, just next door is a store with a minimalist design and an impressive collection of eco-friendly basic wardrobe items — classic long coats, solid-colored sweaters, and simplistic, yet fashionable work attire. Sweaters start at \$130, and pants are between \$100 and \$350, depending on the brand. A basic cotton shirt retails for \$35.

Centre Commercial is the newest venture from the founders of the environmentally sustainable shoe brand Veja, Sébastien Kopp and François Morillon.

“Centre Commercial is more than a store, but a space where we can be a catapult for other projects,” Mr. Kopp said. “It’s cool to be in a dynamic which gathers art, fashion, sustainability, environment, activism. That’s the world we are at ease with.”

The pair recently opened a second location in the chic St.-Germain-des-Près neighborhood, but they do not plan to expand beyond Paris, although their online boutique ships worldwide.

“Centre Commercial requires a lot of love, a lot of attention,” Mr. Kopp said. “We feel more at ease to have a center of gravity here in Paris.”

From Centre Commercial, walk about 15 minutes south to reach the 1083 Boutique in the Marais. The brand manufactures jeans in France from 100 percent organic cotton or recycled materials. The company’s name, 1083, speaks to its commitment to create and transport products no farther than 1,083 kilometers (673 miles) — the longest distance between two cities in France. Jeans for both men and women range from \$98 to \$130.



A shopper at Aujourd’hui Demain with a vegan bag. Elliott Verdier for The New York Times



Faux-leather shoes at Aujourd'hui Demain. Elliott Verdier for The New York Times

Continuing south, cross the canal and into the 11th Arrondissement. A vegan concept store, Aujourd'hui Demain, sells anything from socks with tofu graphics (\$8) to chic raincoats made from recycled plastic to faux fur jackets (\$330). It also has a small vegan grocery store and a cafe.

On a recent rainy Sunday afternoon, it seemed as if every hipster in Paris was crowded into the tiny space. Customers with blue hair and double nose rings shook water droplets off their jackets and perused the store's clothing and makeup selection while waiting for a spot at one of the cafe's few tables.

If you're feeling hungry after the shopping excursion, the restaurant and coffee shop inside Aujourd'hui Demain offers innovative cuisine such as fried chickpea burgers (\$13), tacos with jackfruit "carnitas" (\$4 each) and even their own housemade vegan pumpkin spice latte (\$5.50). There are also more classic items like banana bread, cinnamon rolls and cappuccinos (all \$5). If your visit coincides with happy hour, you can also enjoy a strawberry mojito or a "blue" margarita (\$8).

Eco-fashion abounds beyond the Canal St.-Martin area, although it requires a ride north on Line 4 of the Métro to reach Les Récupérables or La Recyclerie. The two are well worth the trip and propose fresh takes on sustainability.

Established in 2016, Les Récupérables originally introduced its biannual collections in "secret sales" hosted in different Parisian apartments. With its new boutique in the 18th Arrondissement, the brand now has a permanent home for its small collection of impeccably designed clothes.

Though one can find classic dark and neutral tones, Les Récupérables also features brightly colored, bold-patterned tops (\$95), skirts (\$105) and pants (\$140) that can be harder to find in Parisian stores.

All clothing by Les Récupérables is made from old household linens and "nonconforming" materials that would otherwise be thrown out by a factory. The brand uses no new textile fabrics in an effort to protect natural resources. Garments for Les Récupérables are manufactured in Marseille, France, to reduce the brand's carbon impact and empower French workers.

For the founder and artistic designer, Anaïs Dautais Warmel, creating sustainable and ethically sourced clothing is essential.

"I grew up being taught certain environmental and social values," Ms. Dautais Warmel said. "Today we can advocate, but changing the ways we consume is what has real impact."

With the boutique, Les Récupérables is able to offer a permanent community center and workshop space where consumers can meet, exchange ideas and learn more about "upcycling" and "giving materials a second life," Ms. Dautais Warmel explained.

In an old train station on the outskirts of Paris, La Recyclerie also aims to give products a second life. The shared urban space and coffee shop near the Porte de Clignancourt hosts food markets, flea markets and workshops. People can bring old appliances to be repaired or even rent household items. The restaurant serves meals with produce from their gardens and eggs from the facility's chickens.

Every year, La Recyclerie holds popular Christmas markets to promote environmentally responsible living practices during the holiday season. There are three weekends of events, and the market over the weekend of Dec. 7 and 8 is dedicated to "ethical and eco-responsible fashion." Brands and designers applied in October for a place at one of the market's stalls.

The sustainable fashion market is co-hosted by Atypique Atípico, an "eco-design studio and environmentalist consultancy," and Slo We Are, an online French platform that helps consumers find sustainable and ethical clothing brands. All the listed brands guarantee equitable and environmental production practices and fair labor conditions for employees.

“We find brands that are engaged and transparent from the first material to the final product,” said Eloïse Moigno, a co-founder and chief executive of Slo We Are.

Although there is much to explore in the sustainable and ethical fashion ecosystem in Paris, it is perfectly acceptable to spend days searching for just one piece. This style of shopping is budget-friendly and better for the environment.

“Buy one piece in the collection and other things at yard sales and vintage stores,” said Ms. Dautais Warmel of Les Récupérables. “The idea is to consume less, but better.”