



## FROM THE SUBLIME TO THE SPORTY

For the finest selection of luxurious underwear and swimwear, the upmarket boutiques of Paris are the places to go, suggests **Jennifer Ladonne**



Where else but Paris to shop for the world's most beautiful lingerie? Parisian women are known for their no-nonsense approach to sexiness, it's just a fact of life. You'll notice while strolling through the city's streets and boutiques that Parisians rarely go for in-your-face seduction. It's subtlety, elegance, individuality and a soft, smouldering glamour they prefer.

Our pick runs from meticulously crafted haute-couture lingerie – an expertise born and perfected in Paris – to the better fashion lingerie chains. Something for every woman on any budget.

#### CADOLLE: THE TRAILBLAZER

The famous Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889 introduced two iconic structures: the Eiffel Tower and the world's first bra. After participating in the revolutionary Paris Commune, Herminie Cadolle sparked her own revolution by cutting the traditional corset in two, finishing the top half with back laces and silk shoulder straps to support a woman's bosom and

freeing her from the torturous whalebone corset. In 1911, the boutique moved to the Rue Cambon – a new fashion district – where it remains today. Grande Dame by history only, Cadolle has stayed true to its roots by moving with the times, creating some of the most sumptuous and alluring lingerie on the planet. Each piece is handmade from the finest fabrics and French lace, and ranges from demurely sensuous to smouldering (look for pieces in luxurious black Calais lace, a house specialty). This is where aristocrats and movie stars have shopped for a century, and the client list reads like a sexy who's who: Mata Hari, Catherine Deneuve, Brigitte Bardot, even Cary Grant stopped by. Still family-run, Herminie's descendant, Patricia Cadolle, is delighted to welcome you for your very own made-to-measure fantasy in three fittings in the pink-Champagne-hued Rue Saint-Honoré showroom.

● Cadolle, 4 rue Cambon. [www.cadolle.fr](http://www.cadolle.fr)

#### LOUISE FEUILLÈRE: MASTER CRAFTSPERSON

Paris's only Meillure Ouvrier de France (Best Craftsperson of France) bra-maker, Louise Feuillère >>



Cadolle has been creating luxury made-to-measure underwear since 1887



**Clockwise from top:** Louise Feuillère's underwear is tailored for the perfect fit, no matter your size or shape; Carine Gilson's stylish boutique; one of Gilson's delicate silk and lace creations

has the no-nonsense approach of a woman who takes her mastery for granted. Instead of the *luxe boudoir* theme you might expect, her boutique-workshop is cluttered with the tools of her trade; her beautiful corsets, camisoles, silk panties and nighties confined to the front window and sidelines, and the bras – her specialty – tucked away in a wall of drawers.

After attending Paris's prestigious fashion design school, Feuillère's first job was designing orthopaedic clothing – for her, the best education anywhere in how the body is structured and moves. "No-one is perfectly symmetrical right and left," she says, which is why she offers several services to be sure the bra you choose is as close to a 'first skin' as possible. Though you can walk out of the boutique with a bra from her stock (by appointment), you will be fitted for your perfect size. If needed, or desired, the bra can be altered, customised

or totally made-to-measure from the best cottons, silks, polyester, and fine Calais lace in the style and colour you desire. Feuillère also makes several styles of panties to match, plus swimsuits, corsets, slips, camisoles, nightgowns and robes. For alterations, a bra or other item can take from one week to six months, depending on the work (€120-€365 for stock bras, more for alterations; nightgowns start at about €650; price for made-to-measure on demand).

● **Louise Feuillère**, 102 rue des Dames.

[www.louisefeuillere.com](http://www.louisefeuillere.com)

### CARINE GILSON: ETHEREAL ELEGANCE

You might as well be wearing a cloud, so light are Carine Gilson's dreamy creations,



"EACH GARMENT MAY WEIGH BARELY MORE THAN A WHISPER ON THE SKIN, BUT THE IMPACT IS RESOUNDING"

whether it's a gossamer kimono, a bias-cut, lace-edged mousseline gown or a featherweight caftan in transparent 'plume' silk edged in satin. Each garment may weigh barely more than a whisper on the skin, but the impact is resounding. These are haute couture garments: sophisticated, glamorous, exquisitely designed and meticulously crafted. Gilson is also a master colourist, and though styles evolve more slowly, her refined colour palette, which includes both solids and romantic prints, changes three times a year for her summer, winter and cruise collections. Every item in the boutique is handmade in her Brussels atelier of Lyon silk, edged or overlaid with the finest French Calais lace and has the allure of something utterly precious – with prices to match. An exquisite bridal kimono of white-on-white silk and lace spotted at the boutique runs to about €3,000, a golden, black-lace-edged babydoll is about €1,000 and bras start at €500.



Because the styles are so beautiful, wearing them as eveningwear and not just undergarments is encouraged. Gilson offers a bespoke service too.

● **Carine Gilson**, 16 rue de Grenelle.

[www.carinegilson.com](http://www.carinegilson.com)

### FIFI CHACHNIL: THE FLIRT

Fifi Chachnil is here to ensure that every girl's daily, or nightly, romp is all good, flirty fun – sashaying down the street in one of her *toile de jousy* pencil skirts, chasing a beach ball in a halter swimsuit or painting the town in a sleek, striped-silk bodysuit. Chachnil's pink boudoir-esque boutique, on a chic stretch of Rue de Grenelle in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, is the perfect place to indulge your inner pin-up girl. Chachnil – whose real name is Delphine Véron, but she's adopted

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the name of her brand – does her own vintage updates on the '50s look with nylon negligees in ice cream colours, bra and panty sets (starting at around €225) in silk satin, polka-dot silk mousseline with lace overlays, and teddies in soft pastel nylon. Ruffles are a mainstay and some corsets and bras sport swansdown or tiny sequins. The Babyloo, a cap-sleeved, cinched-waist button-down bodysuit comes in a range of printed or solid transparent silks (€377) and is one of the hallmarks of the house, though Chachnil is branching out more and more into ready-to-wear.

Her other boutique and workshop, where all the lingerie is handmade, is located on Rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau, which, she points out, is where the philosopher taught. “He hated corsets,” she giggles.

Chachnil's perfume and a CD of the designer singing her favourite chansons are available at both boutiques.

● **Fifi Chachnil**, 34 rue de Grenelle, 68 rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau. [www.ffichachnil.com](http://www.ffichachnil.com)

### ERÈS: SMART SOPHISTICATES

Construction and architecture are as key in the Erès lexicon as beauty and sensuality. High-tech body-sculpting fabrics help shape the female form rather than just clinging to it, and simple, comely styles are both contemporary and classic. In France, the label is synonymous with minimal, understated designs that forego blatant eroticism in order to free the body and the lingerie chain, now owned by Chanel, dates back to the free-wheeling '60s, when Irène Leroux founded a swimwear boutique that specialised in resort wear as well as the two-piece swimsuit, both revolutionary at the time. Through her swimsuits, >>

#### Above:

Fifi Chachnil's stores are more boudoir than boutique

#### Below:

A bodysuit from Erès' Charivari collection





Princesse Tam Tam offers a wide section of feminine, practical and affordable underwear and swimwear

Leroux experimented with revolutionary textiles – parachute silk and *peau douce*, which breathes, moves and feels like a second skin. Nowadays, the company's sleek swimwear and lingerie are benchmarks for a more restrained sex appeal: feminine, sophisticated and meant to please the wearer. Meticulously engineered bras, panties, bathing suits and loungewear come in a wide range of luxury fabrics: fine silk tulle, lightweight jersey and top-quality French lace. The designs are beautiful, sensuous and classic, so that swimsuit you paid €300 for will not go out of style anytime soon. Bra and panty sets start at around €350.

● **Erès** has boutiques around Paris and can be found at **Printemps, Galeries Lafayette and Bon Marché**. The Erès flagship store is at 2 rue Tronchet. [www.eres.fr/en](http://www.eres.fr/en)

### **PRINCESSE TAM TAM:** SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Princesse Tam Tam could be considered the French equivalent to Victoria's Secret, except that it does not promote the notion of woman as centrefold. A more down-to-earth ethos and styles that are practical, well-made and affordable contribute to the chain's widespread popularity in France and beyond.

Princesse Tam Tam's wide selection of bras, panties, bodysuits, camisoles, bathing suits, sleepwear and daywear come in feminine, non-restrictive styles and handsome colours, and are pretty and feminine without forcing women into sexualised stereotypes. It's also a brand suitable for most ages, though it does have a youthful edge.

IMAGE © PRINCESSE TAM TAM

### "METICULOUSLY ENGINEERED BRAS, PANTIES, BATHING SUITS AND LOUNGEWEAR COME IN A RANGE OF LUXURY FABRICS"

You'll find a full range of sizes in every style online and in the boutiques, which can be found in pretty much every city in France. A lace underwired bra and panty set costs between €60 and €80, while swimsuits start at about €90. Tam Tam's new budget line, Air Lingerie, in lightweight, breathable polyester will cost you about €40 for a streamlined bra and panty set.

**Princess Tam Tam** has boutiques throughout Paris – addresses can be found at [www.princessetamtam.eu](http://www.princessetamtam.eu)

### **PRINTEMPS:** DEPARTMENT STORE CHOICE

Printemps has spent the last five years refurbishing their Haussmann flagship store, and the sixth-floor lingerie corner, unveiled on 1 April, is the latest department to receive a glamorous top-to-toe makeover. If you're short on time and want a well-chosen, high-end selection of 29 French and European fashion lingerie labels – plus some exclusives, like French designer Olivia von Halle – at your fingertips, then this is a fine place to start.

● **Printemps**, 64 boulevard Haussmann. [www.printemps.com](http://www.printemps.com) **FT**