



EUROPEAN FASHION ODYSSEY

If someone published *The World Atlas of Style*, there would be stars flagging New York and Tokyo, of course, along with slightly smaller ones for up-and-comers like Sydney and São Paulo. Still, a flip of the pages would quickly reinforce what's been true for the past century: Europe is the epicentre of world fashion. So when a client asked us recently to create a style-focused trip for his daughter, a fashion student in New York, we knew we had to head to the Continent.

But where to begin? For every established European fashion capital there's an equally compelling hot spot: emerging centres such as Florence, Amsterdam and even Istanbul vie for attention with traditional powerhouses like Paris and Milan. Faced with such an array of choices, our trip

design team – appropriately enough – had to do some creative thinking.

For starters, why just read the fashion reviews when you can meet the people who write them? And, more to the point, why just sit at designer shows when there's so much to be gained by getting behind the scenes and seeing first-hand what makes the industry tick?

The result of our collaboration – within the team and consulting with our young client – was a meticulously tailored itinerary showcasing not only the best of Europe's past, but also the innovators who are keeping the Continent at the forefront of design. We settled on three locations: Antwerp, which has emerged in recent years as a cultural rallying point; Paris, the quintessential home of haute couture; and

the sun-drenched Côte d'Azur, long known for its glitz, glamour, and provocative attire.

Flying first into Belgium, our fashionista teamed up with a well-known design blogger and TV presenter for an extravagant afternoon of shopping in Antwerp's hippest new boutiques. She met young designers known for their cutting-edge style, along with industry heavyweights who put Antwerp on the fashion map in the '80s and '90s.

To help place Belgian trends in their global context, we arranged a private visit to the prestigious Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp's premier fashion school and an incubator for some of the world's most talented young designers. Our traveller left with a notebook full of inspiring ideas, great advice and valuable industry contacts.



Trading the buzz of Antwerp for the more elegant pace of Parisian haute couture, we arrived in the French capital long after the runways of Fashion Week had been rolled up for another year. But we saw this as an opportunity to go deeper: everyone knows where Paris fashion is now, so why not focus on where it's heading next? A visit to the headquarters of one of the city's hottest style magazines was a good start. Our young client met the editors and writers who would dictate the next season's trends. She also gathered valuable tips from professional photographers and stylists – and even tried on a few pieces from the magazine's mind-blowing collection.

Next, because our traveller was studying merchandising, we arranged a meeting with a buyer for one of the major houses, who walked her through a textile trade show at the Carrousel du Louvre. Events like this provide the crucial links between fashion suppliers and high-end retailers; our client was able to meet fabric wholesalers and representatives from Europe's most prestigious mills, gaining insights into her future profession from some of the best in the business.



Of course it wouldn't be a trip to Paris without a bit of romantic glamour. To ensure appropriately fashionable accommodations, we reserved Coco Chanel's suite at the Hôtel Ritz, which the legendary designer called home for more than 30 years. And rather than arrange any old chauffeur-driven limo, we whisked our fashionista through the trendiest Paris neighbourhoods in a classic 1950s Citroen 2CV. It's all about the accessories...

When people talk about centres of fashion, they don't immediately think of the Côte d'Azur. But at Brown + Hudson we take pride in being a bit contrarian. The French Riviera was gearing up for the Cannes film festival when our client touched down near Saint-Tropez. First, though, we suggested heading south along the coast to the little port town that hosts the Hyères Fashion Festival, an exclusive competition showcasing 10 hot designers from around the globe. Our guest enjoyed front-row access in the company of a previous festival competitor, then headed backstage to meet the newest contenders.



To round out this unique fashion odyssey we organized a visit to a professional photo shoot in Cannes, followed by some serious shopping with a well-known stylist along the boulevards of Saint-Tropez. And as the finishing touch, what better place for our young traveller to show off her purchases than at a celebrity-filled Côte d'Azur nightclub, Les Caves du Roy? Naturally we arranged VIP access. However, we can assure you that at no point in this odyssey did we call anyone dah-ling – that would just be so, you know, last decade. At Brown + Hudson, we understand that fashions come and go, but travelling in style never gets old.