

Love-locked

The excitement surges, unabated, as if you're a new device, wall-plugged and charging. You try to mute anticipation, for this time surely you will remove your Bollés or rose-tinted replicas and see it as it is. Before, you were too young or not young enough; too much in love or falling out of it. But memories indulge. You know this visit must be the last and if nostalgia is the name of the game, go on, splurge— You're arriving in autumn, with aeons of European melancholy attached to every tumbling leaf; when fog is certain to be shifting around the sky-line, softening the macho Meccano strut of the Eiffel Tower or lurking *sous les ponts de Paris*. Paris— you savour the name— Mornings will be cool, fresh wind off the Seine; commuters burrowing into the Métro with scarves wrapped tight, shoulders in the first high shrug of winter. Book-sellers along the embankment will wait for the first warmth to break through before they return life to the footpath. And that's how it is— it still is. Content in the old city, you're the perennial tourist, distanced from suburbs that seethe at the periphery. At first, the aura seems unchanged though no-one can ignore the new reality— security checks at every icon; bollard-studded cobblestones; armed police on high alert; half-empty cafés in Saint-Germain des Prés. Yet the flâneur can still roam at will, charged as ever, for love remains heart-shaped, even when padlocked to bridges and weighed by the ton.

Ref: P.97 *Blue Guide, Paris*, 12th Edition, 2015.

'54 tons of lovelocks were recently excised from the Pont des Arts, which was collapsing under its weight.'