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Shopping for Vintage Fashion Like a French Girl



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Back before globalization (and the Internet) made it possible for the Saint Laurent bag du jour and the latest Chanel quelque-chose to become available worldwide, all of the best things in the French fashion world were concentrated in their place of origin: Paris. And even today, there are still some things that you just can't find online—like the contents of many Parisian closets, which double as sartorial goldmines and are only emptied for the most in-the-know boutiques in Paris. If you don't happen to have a French fairy godmother offering up her most prized possessions, your next best bet are some of the most trusted names on the Parisian vintage circuit—find them here.

Valois Vintage Paris

Tucked away on Rue des Saussaies, right around the corner from the president's residence on the prolific Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, lies one of Paris's best-kept fashion secrets, Valois Vintage Paris. "I didn't start this store as a business, and I still don't see it as one. For me, it is pure pleasure, *un enjeu*," says **Chantal Paillat**, whose fashion library of a boutique was born of her own good taste and a happy accident (a mélange of her own Hermès bags in the windows of her costume jewelry boutique caught the attention of chic passersby). The consignment business progressively grew, and suddenly, owners of some of the most impressive Parisian closets were offering up pieces of their sartorial histories.

So how does Paillat convince these women to part with their treasures? "Once you start opening up your closet, it becomes addictive. You realize the value of passing your things on to the next person, of giving them a new life." Granted, these women have a certain faith in Paillat as their sartorial adoption caseworker, a trust that she will pass their items into the right hands. "I don't sell anything to just anybody. There are some pieces that I fall in love with and don't want to let go," she says, recounting a recent example, when she adamantly refused to sell a friend an Hermès Kelly that she was particularly fond of. Many of Paillat's clients are boldface names: actors, or their stylists, who come seeking special pieces for galas and red carpet events. The stock is also carefully cataloged in her online boutiques, which yields a big chunk of business, particularly among Americans. As for the French? "They don't buy much, it's not part of the culture," she says, further proving that those who don't do really are excellent teachers.

Valois Vintage Paris, 8 Rue des Saussaies 75008, Paris; valoisvintage-paris.com

