

# the top FRENCH 10

WARDROBE ESSENTIALS

13210 SAINT REMY DE PROVENCE, FRANCE

*I wanted to share with you my reflections about French women and their fashion sense... as French Essence readers we share a love for all things French and especially fashion.*

*We are women who embrace life, who are engaged with and adapt to the changing world. Fashion is an avenue we can all explore, personalise and take pleasure in.*

*The Top Ten French Wardrobe Essentials is exclusively for you... to say thank you for your wonderful friendship and your continued loyalty.*

*xx*

# ELLE GANT

The French woman is chic, elegant and well put together. She seems to know the best way to accessorise, to wear her hair and to combine her clothing.

Oftentimes her attractiveness is about inner **BEAUTY**... she also understands how to work the less ephemeral to her advantage.



# The White Shirt

## WHY?

There are never too many white shirts.  
The white shirt is the easiest of fashion pieces and has vast appeal  
because it suits most shapes and sizes.

## HOW?

Wear it buttoned up or unbuttoned.  
Wear it tucked in, wear it out.  
Wear it with epaulettes, with pockets or without.  
Wear it with a pointed collar or mandarin style.  
Wear it full bodied or slim fitting.  
Wear it plain or wear it pleated.  
Wear it in cotton, linen or satin.

## WHEN?

The white shirt is the perfect solution on those days when nothing seems right.  
Those days when however full the cupboard is, it seems bare.  
Dress it up for work and down to play.  
The white shirt looks elegant, chic and never puts a foot wrong.

## WHERE?

Under a tailored suit with trousers or a skirt... tucked into a pencil is the  
most sophisticated silhouette.  
Or think Dior and match with a fuller form.  
Button up for a more formal approach or add a masculine necktie.  
Loose with jeans... add the decorative necklace and an armful of bangles.  
Belted and paired with the black pant... Grace Kelly is your muse.

# The Top

## WHY?

A good tee shirt is one of the most important fashion items. It will be made from superior fabric, be well shaped and last a reasonable length of time with wear and tear.

White, black and grey are the three basic colours that make up the tee shirt essentials.

Cashmere sweaters are much like the tee shirts. They need to be well shaped and of fine quality. Cream, black, navy and grey are the French wardrobe basics.

## HOW?

Tee shirts and cashmere sweaters are the non-negotiables in the wardrobe.

They mix and match with most outfits.

The combinations are endless and the French way is to mix the simple with the more structured.

## WHEN?

Layer the cashmere sweater over the tee shirt and add a blazer.

## WHERE?

Wear the cashmere and wear the tee shirt every day, in every climate and every hemisphere.

[more about THE TOP ►](#)



*The Top*

THE TOP TEN FRENCH WARDROBE ESSENTIALS



# TIME THE ESSENTIALS

French women know that if they look good, they feel good. To look good requires effort, knowledge and investment. They expend huge energy and incur large expense for their hair, face and body routines, so it is **NATURAL** for the same focus to apply to their clothing. The two strategies work hand in hand.



*The Pant*

THE TOP TEN FRENCH WARDROBE ESSENTIALS

# The Pant

**WHY** It's a question of finding the right pair with the right fit. The best starting points are the 'skinny' and the 'slim boyfriend' fits. The black pants should be well tailored and sit neatly around the waist and the bottom. The length is determined by the style... slim, Capri, cuffed or straight leg. Like the white shirt, there are no limits to the number of black pants and jeans in the wardrobe. Who is counting?

**HOW** The jeans work with everything separately or together... the leather jacket, the tuxedo jacket... the white shirt, the tee shirt and the cashmere sweater. Jeans are like a uniform; the one article of clothing that we don't have to anguish over. The black pants, like the jeans, can be worked up or down. Substitute the denim for the black pants if jeans aren't the favourite. Wear them with boots and the leather jacket for the French "look". Refine the wearing with the tuxedo jacket and the tee shirt. Simply add a white shirt to any style of black pants... a little ornamentation and glamorous is only moments away.

**WHEN** Most days would see me wearing one or the other. Black pants, the white shirt and a cute pair of shoes means we can be out the door in minutes. Timeless, ageless and a fashion win/win. French women understand that.

**WHERE** Go anywhere, be anywhere. Jeans and black pants can take you to most places and to most events anywhere in the world when worn with the right accessories.



# The Flat

I can picture her now walking the streets of Paris.

She wears a trench coat with belt knotted around the waist and a white collar peaks out from under her chin.  
Her skinny jeans are finished with a pair of flats.

Without the individual woman's sense of style, this  
would almost be a uniform.

## WHY?

Loafers and ballerinas are the French woman's shoe of choice (along with the sneaker... but that's for the "extras" list).

## HOW?

Flats, whether loafers or ballerinas, can be worn with every one of the top ten French wardrobe essentials.

## WHEN?

Flats... are they ever not worn?

## WHERE?

Here, there and everywhere.



## WHY?

The Trench coat is easily the most practical and most stylish of all overcoats. Wear a trench coat and immediately you looked dressed and most importantly, feel fabulous.

## HOW?

The biggest decision is between the classic beige and the workable black. Wear the trench with the jeans, with the black pants and over the little black dress. Wear it to dinner and wear it to the gym. Dress it up with heels, dumb it down with sneakers. Button up the white shirt and throw the cashmere sweater over the shoulder.

## WHEN?

Catherine Deneuve sets the standard when it comes to the trench coat. Whether as the provocative Belle du Jour or the gracious face of Louis Vuitton, Catherine Deneuve knows how to wear the trench coat well. The trench coat is a coat for all seasons; wear it well and wear it often.

## WHERE?

The trench coat is a travellers dream, the city dwellers saviour and the fashion lover's go-to.

more about **THE TRENCH** ▶

# INDIVIDUAL









# SELF-CONFIDENT

The French woman commands our fashion respect. She seems to not only know herself but also to feel completely at ease with her personal style. The French woman recognises her limitations and plays to her strengths.

She is **BIEN DANS SA PEAU**.

«**WHEN A  
LITTLE BLACK DRESS** is right,  
**THERE IS NOTHING**  
to wear in its place. »

Coco Chanel.

**WHY** The little black dress is an absolute when it comes to French wardrobe essentials. Like the tee shirt, the cashmere and the white shirt, there can never be too many LBDs. Like children, no two are ever the same. On a cost per wear basis the little black dress comes up trumps.

**HOW** Simple is best with heels, flats or boots. Add the leather jacket for an informal approach. Wear the little black dress with the tuxedo jacket for a night on the town.

**WHEN** When in doubt, the little black dress is always the one.

**WHERE** Wear it for that special evening ... or wear it to please yourself. The little black dress should be worn not saved.

more about **THE LITTLE BLACK DRESS** ►



IN 1966 YVES SAINT LAURENT DROPPED LE BOMB WITH LE SMOKING, A TUXEDO SUIT OF VELVET OR WOOL—BLACK-TIE MENSWEAR REINTERPRETED FOR THE FEMALE FORM.

SAINT LAURENT’S TUXEDO HIT JUST AS THE WOMEN’S MOVEMENT WAS BURSTING AT THE SEAMS. AGAINST A FASHION BACKDROP OF YO-YOING MINI, MIDI, AND MAXI HEMLINES, LE SMOKING MATERIALIZED AS THE BOLD, SOPHISTICATED CHOICE FOR THE LIBERATED WOMAN.

“THE THING ABOUT A TUXEDO IS THAT IT IS VIRILE AND FEMININE AT THE SAME TIME,” SAID THE FRENCH ACTRESS CATHERINE DENEUVE, A LONG TIME SAINT LAURENT MUSE.

the tuxedo according to vogue



## WHY?

The tuxedo suit is one of the most seductive outfits a woman can wear.

## HOW?

The tuxedo works best with a ruffled white shirt and lots and lots of jewellery, add a pair of stilettos for the finale.

## WHEN?

The tuxedo is the ideal French essential for a black tie event.

Split the suit up and wear the jacket with jeans, the striped pant with the cashmere sweater and sneakers.

Don’t be afraid to wear it every chance you can, either together or as separates.

## WHERE?

There is nowhere that a tuxedo can’t travel.

more about THE TUXEDO ►



# ROUTINE

French women have a unique approach to dressing. Less is more, **CLASSIC** is key and accessories are king.

Wardrobe investments are considered and made cautiously. These decisions are not age dependent... timeless style is not reserved for older women. Women of all ages have similar wardrobe essentials... it's how they put them together that makes the difference.



*The Biker Boot*

# The Biker Boot

**WHY** The biker boot is the partner to the leather jacket... Practical in origin, both the leather jacket and the biker boot have become fashionable wardrobe essentials. When comfort and fashion go hand in hand... like the leather jacket, the less embellished the better. Simple leather straps and buckles over extravagant stirrups and studs.

**HOW** Wear the biker boot with skinny jeans. It's a proven look that needs no re-interpretation. Depending on age, the biker boot and shorts partner well.

**WHEN** The biker boot is the everyday casual shoe of choice in winter and very often in summer depending on climate. In Paris, the biker boot is worn all year round.

**WHERE** The biker boot reigns supreme when it comes to street style.

more about **THE BIKER BOOT** ►





wearing high heels is like therapy... as soon as you put them on you feel stronger and more confident. remember cinderella; her glass slipper is testament to that.

VICKI ARCHER

## WHY?

Heels, whatever any one will tell you, are far more flattering than flats. Wear them selectively, for short bursts of time, get in training... never give in. They really are our friends. French women know when to wear a heel and when to wear a flat.

## HOW?

Know your foot and your tolerance to heel height. An 8cm heel is my friend; the 10 cm heel the enemy. 2cms is all it takes to turn pleasure into pain. If the stiletto is too high, try the kitten heel. Pointed toes or rounded toes, either will do. A point might pinch but it will elongate the foot and give the illusion of narrower ankles.

## WHEN?

A heel is easier to wear at night when there is less distance to travel. Save the heels for those wardrobe essentials, like the tuxedo or the tailored black pants that need some formality. Dress up the jeans with a pair of heels, the white shirt and the leather jacket. The little black dress needs no excuse.

## WHERE?

For as long and as far as your feet can carry you.

more about **THE HEEL** ►



The leather jacket is a must-have French wardrobe essential.

The leather jacket can dress up or down, depending on what is worn underneath.

The biker style leather jacket is one that requires adaption, dependant on age. A simple cut with few embellishments works best, mid length with slightly nipped in waist, side pockets and simple closures. Get the look but without too much fanfare.

Try the leather jacket over the **LITTLE BLACK DRESS**. Mix the edgy with the formal, the silk with the leather and the chiffon with the zippers.

The French woman wears the biker jacket best... with the white tee, the cashmere sweater, a pair of skinny jeans and ankle boots. Think Emmanuelle Alt of French Vogue.

The Leather Jacket is the best mid-season addition to the wardrobe. It is one of those when-in-doubt-bring-it-out jackets.

Where? Anywhere where chic is required and there is a chill in the air.

more about **THE LEATHER JACKET** ►

# AGGEESES



*The Leather Jacket*



CLICK TO SHOP

the TOP 10 ESSENTIALS



1  
the white shirt

EQUIPMENT  
LAFAYETTE  
J.CREW

2  
the top

THE GAP  
VINCE  
J.CREW  
MIU MIU

3  
the pant

J.BRAND  
CURRENT ELLIOT  
THEORY  
JOSEPH

4  
the flat

TOD'S  
REPETTO  
JIMMY CHOO  
B.P

6  
the little black dress

MAGGY LONDON  
RICK OWENS  
DVF

7  
the tuxedo

SAINT LAURENT  
ALEXANDER MCQUEEN  
RAG & BONE

5  
the trench coat

BURBERRY  
LONDON  
MICHAEL KORS  
LONDON FOG

9  
the heel

CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN  
MANOLO BLAHNIK  
JIMMY CHOO

8  
the biker boot

RAG & BONE  
FIORENTINI & BAKER  
STEVE MADDEN

10  
the leather jacket

SAINT LAURENT  
HALOGEN  
VINCE





# Illustrations<sup>by</sup> **LEO GREENFIELD**

Leo Greenfield grew up in rural Australia, a world far away from the ateliers of high fashion, but it didn't stop him pursuing his dreams. Since graduating from the Victorian College of the Arts, he has contributed to Vogue Magazine, spent time as artist in residence at the salon of Martin Grant Paris and exhibited his artwork widely.

« FOR SOMEONE INTERESTED IN DRAWING, PARIS IS A WEALTH OF INSPIRATION. FROM SITTING IN CAFES OR ATTENDING DESIGNER RUNWAY SHOWS; PARIS TO ME, NEVER DISAPPOINTS.

THROUGH MY ILLUSTRATIONS I SEEK TO CAPTURE REAL ELEGANCE - THE WOMEN OF PARIS SEEM TO KNOW ALL THE RULES BY HEART. »

# Text<sup>by</sup> **VICKI ARCHER**

Vicki Archer is an Australian writer who lives between London and Saint Rémy de Provence in southern France. Born and raised in Australia, her first overseas trip to Paris at the age of ten sparked a passion for travel and adventure that has never ceased.

In the last twenty years she has travelled extensively throughout France and become enamoured with the French way of life. Her first book, MY FRENCH LIFE, was published in 2006 and FRENCH ESSENCE, the second, in 2009.

Her blog, now six years old, is for those who share a love of fashion, beauty and all things French.

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