



*Will Paris force us through a gauntlet of smoke?*

Q: We'll be attending a business meeting in Paris for a week this spring, and although the beautiful city has much to offer, we're worried about being exposed to smoke. We don't want to be choked by cigarettes in cafes, open-air tables, meeting rooms, hotels and everywhere else in the city. We're both very allergic to cigarette and cigar smoke, and want our time in Paris to be smiling, not wiping tears from bleary eyes. What can we do about it?

A: Yeah, we're familiar with all the movies showing lovers in Paris. Remember Bogie and Bergman smooching in clouds of smoke. When we were in Paris in 2002, everyone ... people, cats, dogs, kids ... seemed to be puffing and coughing away in all places, inside and out. There was absolutely no escape from the smoke.

However, in 2007, France began banning cigarette and cigar smoking in public places, including museums, trains stations, trains, cafes and taverns. Smoking is still permitted outside, so anyone walking into a bistro or on the sidewalk nearby still must stagger through clouds of smoke.

We suggest you check with the hosts of the Paris business meeting and tell them of your aversion to cigarettes. If they can't keep you totally free from smokers, at least they may be able to get you rooms in a smoke-free hotel, and suggest cafes and other places in the city you can visit where the air is unpolluted by smokers.