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the WOMEN, *the* MYTHS, *the* LEGENDS

They are coquettish ingénues and cutting-edge sophisticates, sultry screen sirens and trendy tomboys—and always, undeniably chic. Imitate the best elements of French style as worn by some of the nation's most captivating icons and you, too, will have people asking what gives you that 'je ne sais quoi.'

French women possess a stylish allure long admired and imitated to no end, but never fully unraveled. To be French and fashionable is less about adhering to a prescribed formula than giving off a certain enigmatic aura—an air of effortless innocence, or hypercharged sexuality, all fed through an unquestionably chic filter.

Whatever the cultural—or mythological—cause, the country has generated a parade of fashion icons over the years, from sartorial subversive *Coco Chanel* to *Brigitte Bardot*

with her come-hither cat eyes, among others. Such women represent the many shades of French style; and while it may be impossible to fully “crack” their nonchalant approach to all things *la mode*, there are certainly tricks one can learn from these apparel idols. Whether you count an avant-garde like *Carine Roitfeld* or bohemian charmer like *Vanessa Paradis* as your go-to style goddess, we'll help you study—and steal—elements of their way of dress. You know what they say about imitation, after all.



Brigitte Bardot

PROVOCATEURS

Far from going rosy-cheeked at the mere mention of sex, the French revel in life's libidinous pleasures and demonstrate their love of eroticism via clothing. Such is true of seductresses like Eva Green, who sports perpetually smoky bedroom eyes, slinky bodycon black gowns, and lingerie-inspired separates when she hits the red carpet. Lou Doillon, rebellious kid sister to fellow style paragon Charlotte Gainsbourg, sometimes dons tomboy-chic attire, but is better known for her love of lace, leather, and dresses with eyebrow-raising hemlines. But it's Brigitte Bardot who has virtually come to define the French sexpot, pouring herself into curve emphasizing knits, bustiers, and revealing beachwear; Bardot's more-is-more philosophy has taught women that racy need not be a four-letter word.



Eva Green



Lou Doillon

SOPHISTICATES

In contrast to their risqué counterparts, French sophisticates adopt a less showy, yet no less memorable, signature look. Magnetic crossover star *Marion Cotillard* opts for feminine blouse and skirt combinations by day and glamorous floor-length numbers by night; *Audrey Tautou* pairs iconic garments—such as crisp button downs and femme tuxedos reminiscent of *Le Smoking*—with on-trend separates for an *au courant* spin on classics; and Catherine Deneuve, ever the refined bombshell, proves that perfectly tailored shift dresses and trenches are perennially *en vogue*. Smart accessories with a bit of punch, like an animal skin satchel or dazzling chain necklace, add a nicely flashy touch to such streamlined ensembles.

Marion Cotillard



Audrey Tautou



Catherine Deneuve

AVANT GARDES

France is known for producing many a prescient tastemaker over the years. These intrepid individuals have led influential fashion movements and birthed lasting, culture-shifting trends. Gutsily challenging the quotidian, their ingenuity has helped propel style forward, inspiring subsequent generations of creatives to do the same.

History counts *Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel* among this circle of savants, her revolutionary sportswear liberating women from the confines of corsets. Left Bank bohemian *Loulou de la Falaise* (of British and French heritage) followed suit, bringing worldly influences to haute couture runways during the '70s and brashly adorning herself in self-designed accessories. And, of course, there's *Carine Roitfeld*, whose irreverent, sexually-charged approach to fashion illustrates that visionary styling can turn the ordinary into something cutting edge. However diverse, what unites such industry idols is their commitment to innovation and originality above all else.



Carine Roitfeld



Loulou de la Falaise & Yves Saint Laurent



Coco Chanel

MINIMALISTS

French style is synonymous with simplicity: it is unfussy and seemingly innate to members of this fashionable gene pool. The combination of a tissue-thin white v-neck, worn-in denim, and biker boots, for instance, looks immeasurably chic on women like *Charlotte Gainsbourg*, who wears the uniform with classy panache. Gainsbourg predecessor and fellow chanteuse *Françoise Hardy* was fond of an equally pared down look, demonstrating that the right measure of androgyny could ooze sultriness, too. Think Breton-striped tops, polo necks with mod minis, and the occasional hit of fur to top it all off. Dressing with a similar sense of ease is the oft-photographed former model *Vanessa Paradis*. The designer favorite reaches for ethereal gowns and tough footwear and throws sharp blazers over feather-light frocks—a skillful blend of contrasts. Carefree and unassuming, these women manage to keep the public rapt in awe of their vogueish ways.



Charlotte Gainsbourg



Vanessa Paradis

SHOP
French
Style

Françoise Hardy