



Million-euro handbag heists in Paris show how gangs are now targeting luxury leather goods

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Paris

A series of million-euro robberies of luxury handbags from boutiques and brand headquarters in Paris has shown that high-value leather goods are now a bigger target for organised criminals than jewels or cash, as French police pursue sophisticated gangs targeting designer bags.

Paris has been the scene of several high-profile robberies of handbags over the past year, fuelled by the growing global demand for designer leather goods, which are increasingly being displayed by influencers on social media. As handbags sell for record prices at auction – the late singer Jane Birkin's Hermès bag fetched €8.6m (£7.4m) this summer – prices are rising in boutiques and secondhand bags are gaining value as collectors' items.

Jérôme Lalande, an expert on leather goods at the Paris appeals court, said demand for designer handbags was so high that the secondhand market was flourishing, making bags very easy to sell on. "There's a lot of money to be made," he said. "Handbags have come to represent social status."

Last month, the Paris showroom of Houlux, a broker of secondhand designer bags that sells by appointment only, was robbed in a dawn raid. Burglars climbed up to a fourth-floor balcony and in less than 20 minutes took more than 100 luxury bags by brands including Hermès, Dior, Louis Vuitton and Chanel, estimated to be worth a total of €1m.

A few days later, the offices of the luxury brand Louis Vuitton in central Paris were broken into shortly after midnight by two masked men who broke down an inside door and

took a large number of bags, reported to have been worth more than €1m.

In May, a large number of handbags were stolen from a Louis Vuitton boutique on Boulevard Saint-Germain after a car was rammed into the shopfront in the early hours of the morning, allowing the robbers to enter the store and clear the shelves.

It was the third such ram-raid on the boutique in only nine months. In November, neighbours had filmed a car being driven into the same shop in the early hours of the morning as robbers dressed in black calmly loaded up scores of luxury bags before speeding off.

Pascal Carreau, the head of the organised crime unit of Paris's judicial police, said handbags were one of the last remaining high-value objects gangs could target in Paris. "Historically, before the explosion of drugs, French criminals, and particularly Parisian criminals, carried out armed robberies of banks, which in the 1970s had almost no protection at all."

But with banks now well secured and less cash in circulation, patterns had changed. "The teams of criminals who have not moved on to cyber-crime are looking to target physical objects of value on the market. And all that is left are jewels or luxury leather goods," he said.

In January, an employee carrying out a stock inventory in central Paris for LVMH, the conglomerate that owns Louis Vuitton and many other luxury brands, discovered 50 handbags by the label Loewe, worth about €100,000, were missing. Examination of CCTV footage showed two suspects had entered the

building one night before Christmas and exited carrying six large sacks believed to contain the bags.

Last year, a Chanel shop on Avenue Montaigne in central Paris was ram-raided and robbers escaped with bags worth between €500,000 and €1m. In 2024, the home of an influencer who specialised in luxury handbags, and posted photographs of herself posing with her bags in Paris locations, was targeted by thieves who stole items including bags worth between €20,000 and €30,000.

Earlier this year, Paris criminality returned to global headlines when a group of men who in 2016 robbed the US reality TV star Kim Kardashian of her jewellery – including a £3m 18.88-carat diamond engagement ring from her then husband, Kanye West – were found guilty after a high-profile trial.

But Carreau said jewellery heists in Paris had dropped significantly to one or two each year because high-value jewellery pieces, which were often unique "works of art", were hard to resell on the black market. He said luxury bags, on the other hand, were easier to sell on. "The resale is happening on secondhand sales sites. Some of the bags are transported abroad and sold the same way across Europe."

The first six months of 2025 showed a marked drop in crime in general in Paris compared with the previous year: armed robberies were down by more than 9%, burglaries by 15% and theft of cars and motorbikes by 14%.

Carreau said raids on expensive handbag boutiques were not a daily occurrence in Paris, but had a spectacular impact because sometimes





videos by onlookers who witnessed events had circulated on social media.

Lalande said bags were relatively easy to resell because they could not be traced as easily as watches or jewels. He had seen a shift in criminals'

focus on bags over the past 25 years.

"Twenty years ago, I was contacted because a [Hermès] crocodile Kelly bag was stolen from a woman in Paris. The bag was later found in a bin with her wallet that had been emptied. Years ago, a bag would be stolen for its contents. Today the target is the bag itself," he said.



► Handbags are said to be one of the last remaining high-value physical objects gangs can target in Paris, as crime patterns change

PHOTOGRAPH: EVERSUMMER/ALAMY



◄ Demand for designer handbags is so high, the resale market is flourishing, said one leather goods expert

PHOTOGRAPH: EVERSUMMER/ALAMY





► Bags by brands such as Chanel and Hermès (whose Birkin, above right, is highly sought after) are easy to sell on

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