



Musée du Louvre

History

The Musée du Louvre and its continual architectural transformation has dominated central Paris since the late 12th century. The history of this extraordinary structure and of the museum that has occupied it since 1793 has created universal appeal for over seven million visitors in 2005. Built on the city's western edge on the banks of the Seine, the dark fortress of the early days was transformed into the modernized dwelling of François I and, later, the opulent palace of the Sun King, Louis XIV.

In 1793, the Musée Central des Arts opened to the public in the Grande Galerie and the Salon Carré. Anne of Austria's apartments housed the antique sculpture galleries, and further rooms and exhibition spaces were opened under Charles X. The demolition of the Tuileries palace, occupied by the monarchy, in 1882, marked the birth of the modern Louvre. Only the Finance Ministry of France remained in the Richelieu wing, but vacated the building in 1991.

On September 26, 1981, President François Mitterrand announced a plan to restore the Louvre palace in its entirety to function as a museum. The Grand Louvre project was launched, which entailed a complete reorganization of the museum and the construction of the glass pyramid built by I. M. Pei, inaugurated on March 30, 1989. From this date, the museum structure has remained constant, but the Louvre has continued to grow internally with ever-changing exhibitions and acquisitions.

Collection

The Louvre houses 35,000 works of art that date up to the mid-19th century and span eight curatorial departments—Near Eastern, Egyptian, Greek Etruscan and Roman Antiquities, Islamic Art, Sculptures, Decorative Arts, Paintings, and Prints and Drawings.

Near Eastern Antiquities is devoted to the ancient civilizations of the Near East and encompasses a period that extends from the first settlements, which appeared more than ten thousand years ago, to the advent of Islam. Egyptian Antiquities presents vestiges from the civilizations that developed in the Nile Valley from the late prehistoric era (c. 4000 BC) to the Christian period (4th century AD). Greek Etruscan and Roman Antiquities oversees works from the Greek, Etruscan, and Roman civilizations, illustrating the art of a vast area that encompasses Greece, Italy, and the whole of the Mediterranean basin, spanning a period that stretches from Neolithic times (4th millennium BC) to the 6th century AD. The department of Islamic Art displays over a thousand works, most of which were intended for the court or the wealthy elite. They span thirteen hundred years of history and three continents, reflecting the creativity and diversity of inspiration in Islamic countries.

The rooms devoted to "modern" sculpture, opened in 1824, gradually became the Department of Medieval, Renaissance, and Modern Sculpture. Separate collections were founded in 1848 for antiquities and in 1893 for objects d'art. Decorative Arts presents a highly varied range of objects, including jewelry, tapestries, ivories, bronzes, ceramics, and furniture. The collection extends from the Middle Ages to the first half of the 19th century. The department of Paintings reflects the encyclopedic scope of the Louvre, encompassing every European school from the 13th century to 1848. The collection is overseen by twelve curators, who are among the most renowned experts in their field. Prints and Drawings is devoted to the museum's extraordinary collection of works on paper, which include prints, drawings, pastels, and miniatures. These fragile works feature in temporary exhibitions and can also be viewed privately by arrangement. Celebrated works in the collections include Da Vinci's "La Joconde," better known as the "Mona Lisa;" Egyptian antiquities such as the "Seated Scribe," the "Jewels of Rameses II," and the "Code of Hammurabi;" and Greek Antiquities such as the "Winged Victory of Samothrace" and

the “Venus de Milo.” The Louvre’s constantly increasing acquisitions and growing departments make the museum’s holdings one of the most stunning collections of artworks in the world.

Orientation

The Louvre is located in Paris, France, along the rue du Rivoli. The museum is divided into four sections: the Sully, Denon, Richelieu, and Napoleon Halls. Sully outlines the four sides of the Center Carrée (square courtyard) at the eastern end of the building. Denon stretches along the Seine to the south. Richelieu is the northern wing along rue de Rivoli. The split-level public area under the glass pyramid is known as the Napoleon Hall. It contains an exhibit on the history of the Louvre, a bookshop, restaurant, café, and auditoriums for concerts, lectures and films. The centerpiece of the Carrousel du Louvre shopping center, which runs underground from the pyramid to the Arc du Triomphe du Carrousel is an inverted glass pyramid, also designed by Pei.

Museum Hours & Admission

Monday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Wednesday, 9 a.m. to 9:45 p.m.

Thursday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Friday, 9 a.m. to 9:45 p.m.

Saturday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Sunday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The museum is closed on Tuesdays and some public holidays. The Pyramid and Galerie du Carrousel entrances are open daily from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., except Tuesdays. The Passage Richelieu entrance is open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., except Tuesdays. The Porte des Lions entrance is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., except Tuesdays and Fridays.

Friday Evening Openings: Discover the Louvre from a different angle every Friday from 6 to 10 p.m. Free admission for young people under 26. Reduced admission for all other visitors.

€3.50

This ticket provides full-day access to the Louvre, except for temporary exhibitions in the Hall Napoléon. It is also valid for the Musée Eugène Delacroix.

€6

(from 6 p.m. to 9:45 p.m.)

This ticket provides access to the Louvre, except for temporary exhibitions in the Hall Napoléon, on Wednesday and Friday evenings.

For more information about the Musée du Louvre, visit www.louvre.fr

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