**History of the Louvre**

The Louvre was originally built as a fortress in 1190, but was reconstructed in the 16th century to serve as a royal palace. "Like many buildings, it was built and rebuilt over the years," said Tea Gudek Snajdar, an Amsterdam-based art historian, museum docent and a blogger at [Culture Tourist](http://culturetourist.com/).

During its time as a royal residence, the Louvre saw tremendous growth. Nearly every monarch expanded it, according to [History.com](https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/louvre-museum-opens). Today, it covers a total area of 652,300 square feet (60,600 square meters). In 1682, Louis XIV moved the royal residence to Versailles, and the Louvre became home to various art academies, offering regular exhibitions of its members' works.

During the French Revolution, Louis XVI and his wife, Marie Antoinette, were forcibly removed from Versailles and imprisoned in Tuilleries Palace, which was then adjacent to the Louvre, according to the  They were beheaded there in 1793.

The Louvre's collection includes Egyptian antiques, ancient Greek and Roman sculptures, paintings by the Old Masters (notable European artists from before 1800), and crown jewels and other artifacts from French nobles. Its works span the sixth century B.C. to the 19th century A.D. More than 35,000 works are on display at any given time. The displays are divided into eight departments: Near Eastern Antiquities; Egyptian Antiquities; Greek, Etruscan and Roman Antiquities; Islamic Art; Sculptures; Decorative Arts; Paintings; and Prints and Drawings, according to the Louvre website.

Without question, the Louvre's most famous work is Leonardo da Vinci's "[Mona Lisa](https://www.livescience.com/4648-25-secrets-mona-lisa-revealed.html)," who enchants hordes of visitors with her enigmatic smile. This small, iconic painting — it is only 21 by 30 inches (53 by 77 centimeters) is covered with bullet-proof glass and flanked by guards, according to the Louvre website. This protection is the result of it being stolen in 1911. (It was recovered in 1913.)

Crowds also flock to see the armless beauty of the "Venus de Milo," and "Winged Victory," the ancient Greek sculpture also known as "Nike of Samothrace." Other popular works include a stele inscribed with the [Code of Hammurabi](https://www.livescience.com/39393-code-of-hammurabi.html), da Vinci's tragic sculpture "The Dying Slave" and Antonio Canova's 18th-century sculpture "Psyche Revived by Cupid's Kiss." Eugene Delacroix's "Liberty Leading the People," which depicts the bare-breasted Liberty goddess leading a charge in the French Revolution, and is thought to have inspired Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables," and Jacques-Louis David's "The Coronation of Napoleon" was commissioned by Napoleon himself and is a good reminder of the Louvre's history.

Gudek Snajdar gave Live Science some unique Culture Tourist recommendations. Some of her favorites come from the collection of Near Eastern Art. She recommends the "Frieze of Archers" from the sixth century B.C. and "Winged Bull with a Human Head" from the eighth century B.C.

She also suggests viewing another masterpiece by da Vinci, "The Virgin and Child With Saint Anne," which is very close to the "Mona Lisa."

"Instead of getting lost in a crowd in front of the 'Mona Lisa,' I would definitely take a look on that painting and enjoy the work of this Italian painter in a peace and quiet," she said. Also, "a few of Johannes Vermeer's paintings are definitely not to be missed (especially when you know there are only 34 of them in the world). It's a great opportunity to see some of them.

"Although today its collection is the most interesting part of the museum, the building itself is an important exhibit, too," said Gudek Snajdar. The building is primarily of Renaissance and French Classical style, she said. The first medieval elements from the old fortress can still be seen underground, beneath the pyramid, around the lobby area.

"Probably its most famous part is Claude Perrault's 'Colonnade' on the eastern façade of Louvre," said Gudek Snajdar. "It was built in the 17th century and it's a wonderful example of a French Classicism. It's composed of paired Corinthian columns with pavilions at the corners of the facade." She said had influenced many buildings — the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., and the Metropolitan Museum in New York being just some of them.

In 1983, the Louvre underwent a renovation plan known as the Grand Louvre, according to History.com Part of the plan called for a new design for the main entrance. Architect I.M. Pei was awarded the project, and he designed an underground lobby and modern glass pyramid structure in the courtyard. Inaugurated in 1988, the pyramid would become a celebrated element of the landmark museum's design. "It is my personal favorite," said Gudek Snajdar. "Combining traditional style with modern architecture, it shows the Louvre's timeless beauty."

**Louvre Museum Facts**

* The Louvre is the Most-Visited Art Museum in the World. ...
* The Louvre's Galleries Span Over 15 Acres. ...
* The Lourve was Originally a Fortress. ...
* Louvre was Named After Napolean for 11 Years. ...
* The Mona Lisa was Stolen in 1911. ...
* The Louvre was Empty During World War II.

### 1. The Louvre is the Most-Visited Art Museum in the World

The Louvre is the most visited museum in the world followed by National Museum of China, the Tate Modern in London and the [Vatican Museums](https://www.thevaticantickets.com/).

It reached the status of being the most-visited museum in 2018 when it crossed the 10 million visitor mark. Of course, the number of visitors that the Louvre sees was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which forced the museum to shut for 150 days in 2020. That year, the Louvre attendance dropped by 72 percent from 2019.

Despite this, the Louvre continues to see millions of visitors and continues to be the most visited museum in the world with about 15,000 people [visiting the Louvre](http://www.tickets-paris.fr/louvre-museum/plan-your-visit-louvre-museum/) daily..

It is impossible, as a human being, to see the entire Louvre museum in just one day. In fact, even a month of exploring this space wouldn’t be enough.

If you were to spend 30 seconds on each piece of art in the Louvre, it would take 100 consecutive days to get through them all. That is without sleep, breaks or mealtimes.

The most famous museum in the world is fittingly home to one of the most famous paintings in the world.

Leonardo da Vinci’s[Mona Lisa](https://www.discoverwalks.com/blog/top-6-interesting-facts-about-mona-lisa/) is a permanent resident at the Louvre museum.

This famous artwork is responsible for a large portion of the visitors that make their way to this museum each day. So much so, that the painting is now kept behind a glass barrier, and there are barricades preventing anyone from getting too close for comfort.

It is believed by some visitors and museum workers that a mummy named Belphegor haunts the hallways of the Louvre Museum. Since the building dates back to 1190, this would be unsurprising.

The [Tuileries Gardens](https://www.discoverwalks.com/blog/10-interesting-facts-about-le-jardin-des-tuileries/), on which the Louvre Museum is built, are also believed to be haunted by a ghost who appears in the color red. He’s been spotted by multiple individuals and is described as “totally unthreatening” —!

When [Napoleon](https://www.discoverwalks.com/blog/paris-of-napoleon/) came into power, he put his ego front and center and renamed the Louvre Museum the Musée Napoleon.

He expanded the museum’s collection by roughly 5000 paintings, however these were returned to their rightful owners when the leader fell from power.

Napoleon also took the Mona Lisa into his private quarters and hung the painting for the first time.

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| **Musée du Louvre** | |
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| [Wikimedia](https://foundation.wikimedia.org/wiki/Maps_Terms_of_Use) | © [OpenStreetMap](https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright) | |
| **Established** | 10 August 1793; 228 years ago |
| **Location** | Musée du Louvre, 75001 Paris, France |
| **Type** | [Art museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_museum) and [historic site](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historic_site) |
| **Collection size** | 615,797 in 2019[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louvre#cite_note-rapport2019-1) (35,000 on display)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louvre#cite_note-CollectionSize-2) |
| **Visitors** | 2.8 million (2021)[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louvre#cite_note-The_Art_Newspaper,_5_January_2022-3)   * Ranked 1st nationally * [Ranked 1st globally in 2021](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_most_visited_art_museums) |
| **Director** | [Jean-Luc Martinez](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Luc_Martinez) |
| **Curator** | Marie-Laure de Rochebrune |
| **Public transit access** | * [Palais Royal–Musée du Louvre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palais_Royal%E2%80%93Mus%C3%A9e_du_Louvre_(Paris_M%C3%A9tro)) [Paris Métro](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris_M%C3%A9tro) [Paris Métro Line 1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris_M%C3%A9tro_Line_1) [Paris Métro Line 7](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris_M%C3%A9tro_Line_7) * [Louvre–Rivoli](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louvre%E2%80%93Rivoli_(Paris_M%C3%A9tro)) [Paris Métro](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris_M%C3%A9tro) |