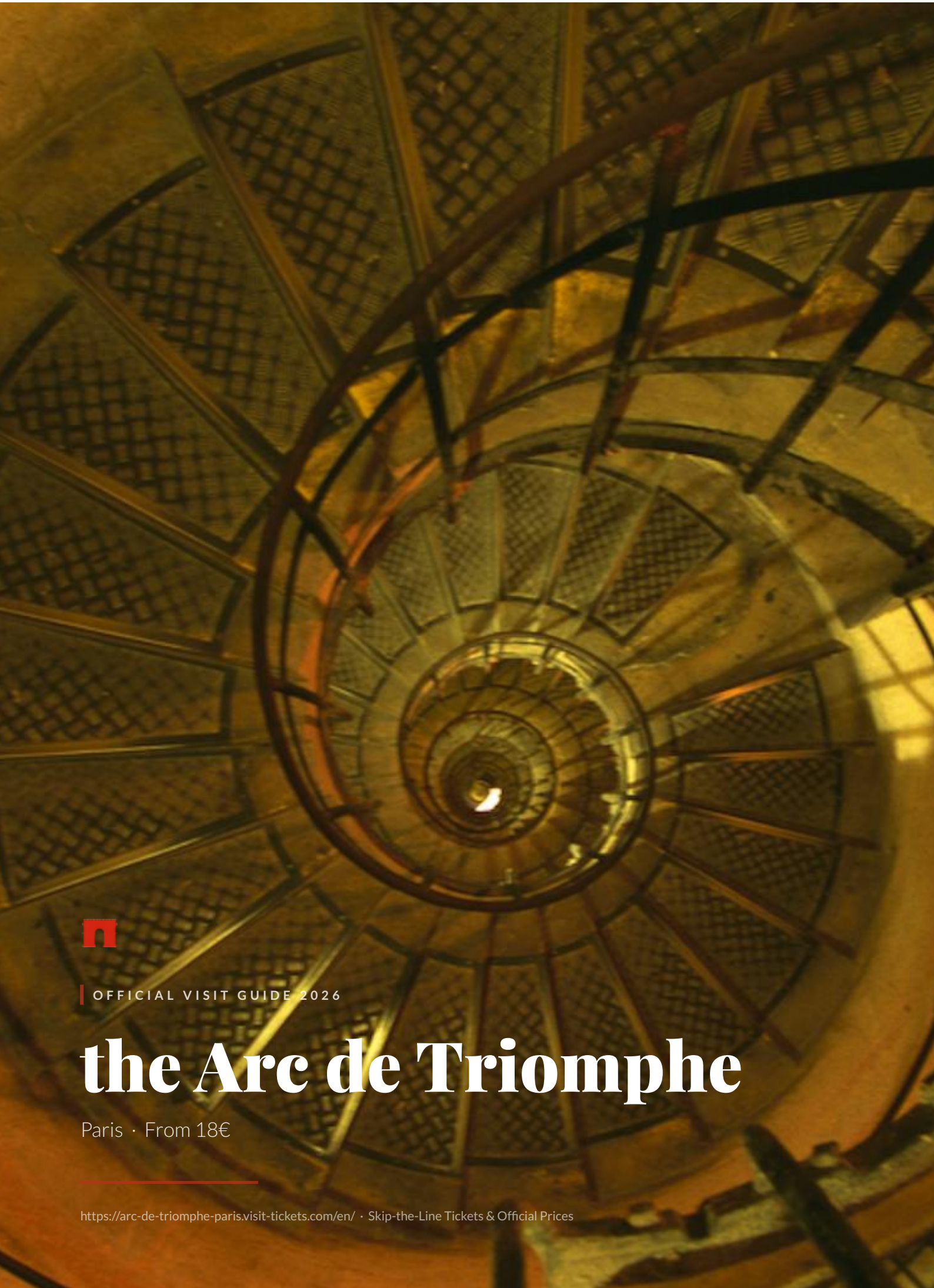


OFFICIAL VISIT GUIDE 2026

the Arc de Triomphe

Paris · From 18€

https://arc-de-triomphe-paris.visit-tickets.com/en/ · Skip-the-Line Tickets & Official Prices



History & Experience

ORIGIN & HISTORY

From Imperial Ambition to National Memory

GOOGLE 4.7 ★★★★★ 294 324 reviews

TIQETS 4.7 ★★★★★ 7 870 reviews

The Arc de Triomphe stands as a monumental testament to French military history, conceived by **Napoleon I** in the aftermath of the decisive Battle of Austerlitz. Commissioned in 1806, the Emperor envisioned it not merely as an architectural feat but as a permanent record of the Grande Armée's victories. Initially, Napoleon intended for the arch to be erected near the Bastille to create a direct perspective toward the Louvre, but the exorbitant cost of land expropriation forced a change of plans. The site was moved to the Place de l'Étoile (now Place Charles-de-Gaulle), where it would dominate the western end of the Champs-Élysées and anchor the grand historical axis of Paris.

Construction began under architect Jean-François Chalgrin, who designed a colossal structure inspired by Roman triumphal arches yet distinctly modern in its scale and simplicity. The building process was fraught with interruptions due to political upheavals, including the fall of Napoleon and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. For nearly three decades, the monument remained unfinished, standing as a skeletal reminder of imperial ambition. It was only under the reign of **Louis-Philippe**, in 1836, that the final stone was placed, completing the arc thirty years after its inception. This long gestation period means that Napoleon himself never passed under the arch he commissioned; he died in exile in 1821, unaware of its ultimate completion.

The structure is a marvel of engineering, weighing approximately **50,000 tonnes** of visible Lutetian limestone, with foundations sinking 8.37 meters underground, bringing the total mass to 100,000 tonnes. Its dimensions are imposing: 49.54 meters high, 44.82 meters wide, and 22.21 meters deep. The design features four massive sculptural groups on the pillars, representing key moments in revolutionary and imperial history, such as 'La Départ des Volontaires en 1792' (later known as La Marseillaise) by François Rude. These reliefs transform the stone into a narrative canvas, chronicling the struggles and triumphs of the French nation from the Revolution through the Napoleonic era.

Beyond its imperial origins, the Arc has evolved into a symbol of national mourning and unity. In 1920, beneath the central vault, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was established, honoring those who died in World War I. An eternal flame, rekindled every evening at 6:30 PM, burns there as a perpetual tribute. Today, the monument serves as the focal point for major national ceremonies, including the annual Bastille Day military parade, where troops march along the Champs-Élysées directly beneath the arch, linking past glories with present-day defense.

THE EXPERIENCE

Approaching the Arc de Triomphe from the bustling Place Charles-de-Gaulle, one is immediately struck by its sheer verticality and dominance over the urban landscape. The twelve avenues radiating from the square converge like spokes on a wheel, drawing the eye upward to the towering structure. As you descend into the pedestrian underpass to reach the entrance, the noise of traffic fades, replaced by a sense of anticipation. Inside, the air is cool and still, contrasting sharply with the vibrant city outside. The interior museum offers a quiet introduction, where plaques and models explain the symbolism of the sculptures, preparing you for the ascent.

Climbing the stairs or taking the elevator, you move through layers of history, each step bringing you closer to the sky. Upon reaching the terrace, the world opens up in a breathtaking panorama. The **golden light** of late afternoon bathes the city in warmth, highlighting the geometric precision of Haussmann's Paris. To the west, the modern skyline of La Défense stretches into the distance; to the east, the historic axis leads back to the Louvre. The wind carries the sounds of the city below, creating a dynamic sensory experience that connects you intimately with the heart of Paris.



PREPARING FOR YOUR VISIT

Practical Information

ADDRESS

Place Charles-de-Gaulle · Metro: Charles de Gaulle - Étoile (Lines 1, 2, 6). Direct exit to the pedestrian underground passage.

OPENING HOURS

Hours vary by season and school holidays. In summer, late opening until 11 PM. Always check before your visit.

PRICES

Free for EU residents under 26. {promo}.

VISIT DURATION

Allow at least 1h30 to explore the indoor museum, climb the stairs, and fully enjoy the panoramic terrace without stress.

PHOTOS

Photography is allowed throughout the monument, including on the terrace. Avoid flash in the interior rooms to respect the artworks and other visitors.

AUDIENCE

Suitable for families (children accompanied), couples, and groups. Note that access is via a long staircase or elevator for disabled guests, not suitable for ve

HOW TO GET THERE

Access & Transportation

Metro / RER

: Avenue de Wagram — 1 min à pied

Gare Montparnasse (16 min) · Gare du Nord (17 min)

Bus

: Charles de Gaulle - Étoile — 3 min à pied

Gare Montparnasse (24 min) · Gare du Nord (26 min)

Car

Gare Montparnasse (17 min) · Gare du Nord (18 min)

Vélib / Bike

Gare Montparnasse (21 min) · Gare du Nord (23 min)

LOCALISATION

Où se trouve the Arc de Triomphe ?



📍 Place Charles de Gaulle — 75008 Paris

🌐 48°52.428′ N, 2°17.702′ E



ORGANIZATION

Navigating the Monument's Levels

Level 0 (Ground Floor)

This level houses the small but informative indoor museum. Here, you will find detailed explanations of the monument's history, the meaning behind the sculptural groups, and the significance of the inscriptions. Interactive displays and models help contextualize the military campaigns commemorated here. It is essential to spend time here before ascending to fully appreciate the artistic and historical nuances of the upper levels.

Level 2 (Intermediate Gallery)

Located midway up the structure, this gallery offers a transitional space between the ground floor and the terrace. While primarily functional, it provides glimpses of the intricate stonework and the names of famous battles engraved on the inner walls. Visitors can pause here to rest during the climb and observe the structural details that support the massive weight of the arch above.

Level 5 (Terrace)

The top terrace rewards visitors with a 360-degree panoramic view of Paris. From here, you can see the perfect alignment of the historical axis, stretching from the Louvre to La Défense. The balustrades allow for unobstructed photography of iconic landmarks like the Eiffel Tower and Sacré-Cœur. This open-air platform is the highlight of the visit, offering a unique perspective on the city's layout and atmosphere.

ACCESSIBILITY

♿ **Accessibility for people with reduced mobility**

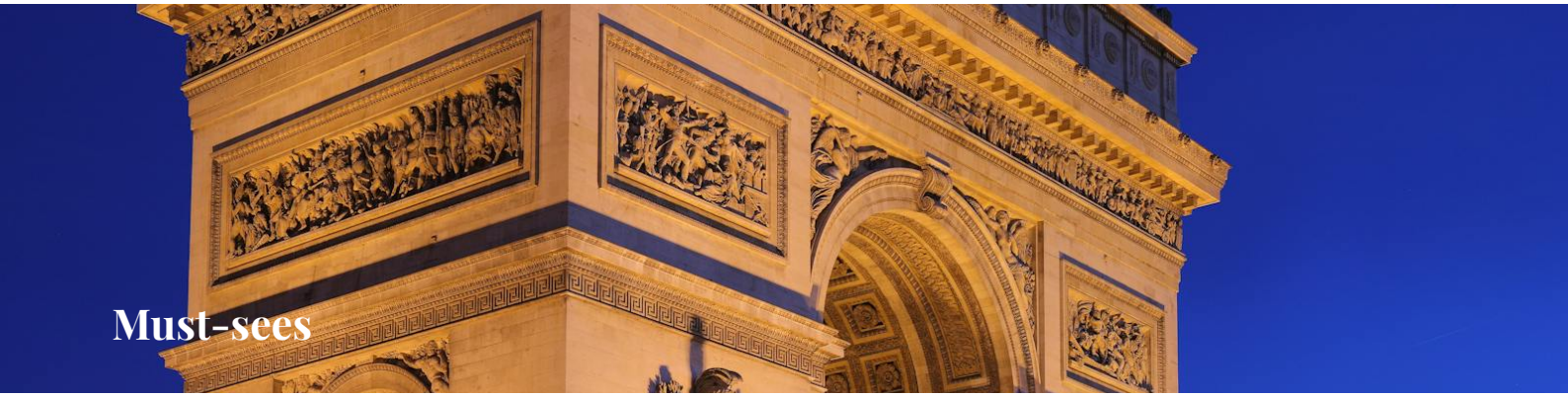
Dedicated elevator for people with reduced mobility providing access to the terrace.

👨‍👩‍👧 **Families**

Visit adapted for accompanied children, with interactive museum and a view that rewards physical eff

🎧 **Audio guide**

French, English, Spanish



Must-sees

SELECTION

Essential Views and Historical Details

01 Under the Central Vault

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

Beneath the arch lies the solemn Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a powerful symbol of remembrance for all French soldiers who died in World War I. An eternal flame burns here, rekindled daily at 6:30 PM by a military ceremony. The inscription reads: 'Here rests a French soldier who died for the Fatherland.' It is a poignant reminder of the human cost of conflict.

> 💡 The body chosen was selected randomly from five unidentified remains found on different battlefields, ensuring it represented **every fallen soldier**.

02 FRANÇOIS RUDE North Pillar

La Marseillaise (Le Départ des Volontaires)

This dynamic sculpture depicts volunteers rushing to war, led by a winged figure blowing a trumpet. It captures the fervor and energy of the French Revolution. The muscular forms and dramatic movement make it one of the most celebrated works of Romantic sculpture. Observe the intense expressions and the flowing drapery that convey urgency and passion.

> 💡 Rude worked on this piece for years, often modeling figures from live models to achieve such **realistic intensity**.

03 Inner Walls

The Names of Battles

Engraved on the inner faces of the arch are the names of 558 battles and 660 generals from the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. Key victories like **Austerlitz** and **Waterloo** are prominently displayed. These inscriptions serve as a stone ledger of military history, allowing visitors to trace the campaigns that shaped Europe. Take time to read these names, connecting them to specific historical events.

> 💡 Some names were added or removed depending on political shifts, reflecting the **changing narratives** of French history.

04 Terrace

Panoramic View of the Historical Axis

From the terrace, look east along the Champs-Élysées to see the uninterrupted line of sight to the Louvre Pyramid. This grand perspective, designed by Napoleon III and Haussmann, showcases the geometric order of Paris. On clear days, you can even spot the Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile's counterpart, the Grande Arche de la Défense, far in the distance. It is a masterclass in urban planning.

> 💡 This axis was carefully engineered to ensure that no building obstructed the view, demonstrating the **power of visual control** in city design.

05 ANTOINE ÉTEX South Pillar

The Sculpture 'Resistance and Victory'

Also known as 'La Victoire,' this group shows Liberty leading the people forward, trampling symbols of tyranny. It complements Rude's work on the opposite side, emphasizing the themes of liberty and republicanism. The composition is balanced yet energetic, with figures intertwined in a struggle for freedom. Note the allegorical elements that represent different virtues of the Republic.

> 💡 Étex faced criticism for the complexity of the scene, but it remains a **defining image** of republican ideals.

06 JAMES PRADIER East Pillar

The Return of Eagles

This relief depicts soldiers returning home, carrying the eagles that symbolize their regiments. It contrasts with the departure scenes, focusing on the aftermath of war and the hope for peace. The mood is more subdued, reflecting the exhaustion and relief of veterans. Look closely at the facial expressions to understand the emotional weight carried by these figures.

> 💡 Pradier's style is more classical and restrained, highlighting the **dignity of return** rather than the chaos of battle.

07 HORACE VERNET West Pillar

The Peace Scene

This sculpture represents the benefits of peace, with figures engaged in agriculture and arts. It serves as a counterpoint to the martial themes elsewhere, reminding viewers of the ultimate goal of military victory: stability and prosperity. The serene atmosphere and soft lines invite contemplation on the value of tranquility after conflict.

> 💡 Vernet included subtle references to contemporary technology, showing how **progress continues** even in times of peace.

08 Terrace

The Sunset Illumination

Visiting 30 minutes before sunset allows you to witness the magical transition from day to night. The golden hour casts a warm glow on the city, while streetlights begin to twinkle like stars. Watching the Eiffel Tower sparkle shortly after dusk adds a layer of enchantment to the experience. This timing maximizes the photographic potential and emotional impact of the visit.

> 💡 Many photographers consider this the **best moment** to capture the essence of Paris.

TIPS

Practical Tips for an Unforgettable Visit

TIMING

Arrive 30 minutes before sunset to enjoy both the golden light and the city lights turning on.

BILLET

Book tickets online in advance, especially in summer, to avoid long queues and save time.

PARCOURS

Start with the indoor museum to understand the context, then climb slowly to appreciate the details.

PHOTO

Use the south balustrade to frame the Eiffel Tower without obstructions for the perfect shot.

PAUSE

Head to cafés on the Champs-Élysées or Trocadéro after the visit to rest and digest the view.

ENFANTS

Ensure children are accompanied and prepared for the climb; the view is rewarding for families.

AUDIOGUIDE

Rent an audioguide in English or French to gain deeper insights into the sculptures and history.

CONFORT

Wear comfortable shoes for the staircase climb and check weather conditions for the terrace.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Do I need to book my tickets in advance?

Yes, online booking is highly recommended, especially during peak season (July-August) and on weekends. It allows you to avoid long queues at the ticket office and guarantees your entry. On weekdays outside of school hol

Is the ticket free for young Europeans?

Yes, entry is free for European Union residents under the age of 26. You must present a valid ID card proving your age and residence. This offer also applies to guided tours, but booking remains mandatory to secure your

Are there guided tours available?

Several options are available: self-guided tour, commented tour by staff (free if ticket purchased, daily at 10:15 AM, 11:15 AM, and 3:15 PM), or private conference bookable online. The conference lasts approximately 1h3

How far in advance can I cancel?

Cancellation terms depend on the type of ticket purchased. For standard tickets, cancellation is often possible up to 24 hours before the visit. Always check specific terms during your online purchase. In case of excepti

How long does the complete visit take?

Allow approximately 1h30 for a complete visit including the indoor museum, the ascent (stairs or elevator), and time spent on the panoramic terrace. If you participate in a guided conference, allow an additional 1h30. Ta

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

Napoleon Never Saw It

It is a striking fact that **Napoleon I** never passed under the arch he commissioned. He died in 1821, while construction was still ongoing. The monument was completed in 1836 under Louis-Philippe, making it a posthumous tribute to his ambitions.

Colossal Weight

The Arc weighs approximately **50,000 tonnes** of visible stone, but with its deep foundations, the total mass reaches 100,000 tonnes. This immense weight required innovative engineering techniques for its time to ensure stability.

Failed Initial Location

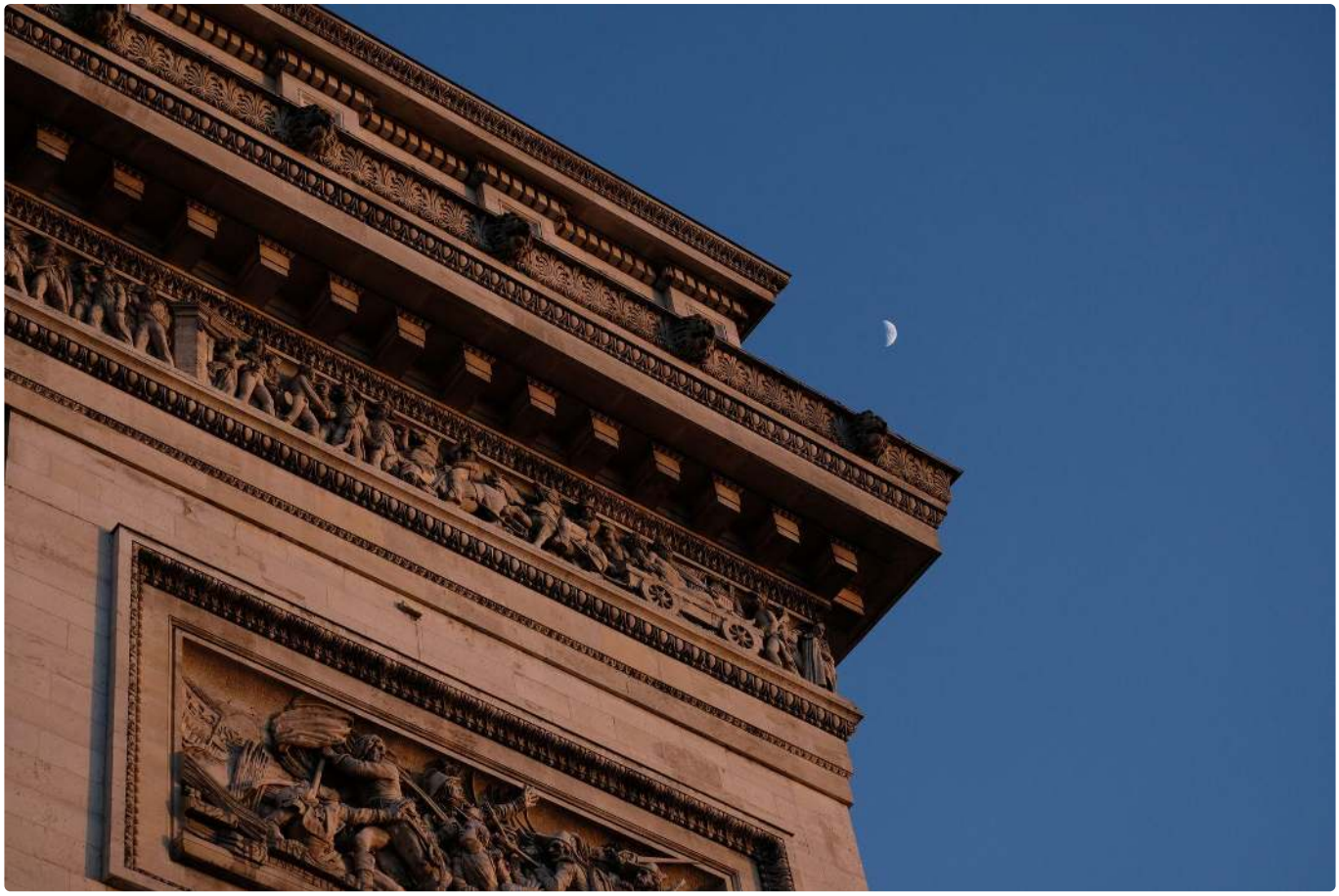
Napoleon originally planned to build the arc near the Bastille to align with the Louvre. However, the high cost of land expropriation led to the choice of the **Place de l'Étoile**, which offered better perspectives and lower costs.

Eternal Flame Ceremony

The flame at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is rekindled every evening at **6:30 PM**. This precise timing ensures continuity and respect, drawing crowds who gather to witness this solemn ritual of remembrance.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

After your visit, explore the elegant surroundings that define this prestigious area. Just steps away, the **Trocadéro Gardens** offer a serene green space with stunning views of the Eiffel Tower, perfect for a relaxing picnic or a leisurely stroll. For a touch of luxury, head to the nearby Galeries Lafayette Haussmann, where the majestic glass dome provides a spectacular backdrop for shopping and dining. If you wish to extend your cultural journey, walk down the Champs-Élysées towards the Opéra Garnier and enjoy tea at the legendary Café de la Paix. Alternatively, continue eastward to discover the Louvre Museum, completing the historical axis that begins at the Arc. These attractions provide a rich tapestry of experiences, blending art, architecture, and gastronomy.



Standing atop the Arc de Triomphe is more than just viewing a landmark; it is engaging with the living memory of France. Whether witnessing the sunset cast long shadows across the Champs-Élysées or paying respects at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, visitors leave with a profound sense of connection to history. This monument invites reflection on the costs of war and the enduring spirit of resilience. It is a place where **past and present** converge, offering a moment of awe that lingers long after you descend back into the flow of daily life.