

Glossary

Constituante: assembly called together to draw up a constitution. That of 1789 led to the elimination of the Ancien Régime in France.

Enlightenment: school of philosophical thought in 18th-century France, based on reason and denouncing injustice.

Génovéfains: canons living in a community and attached to the adoration of Saint Geneviève.

Jansenists: partisans of an austere, strict Christian doctrine based on grace and predestination.

Rebacking: gluing a painting canvas onto a different surface.

Restoration: reestablishment of the monarchy with the reigns of Louis XVIII and Charles X, from 1814 to 1830.

Jacques-Germain Soufflot (1713-1780): Pantheon architect, he was the main representative of the neoclassical style under Louis XVI.

Year II: second year of the 1st French Republic after its founding in September 1792.

Visitor information

Average length of visit: 1½ hours.

Guided tour of the nave in French.

Appropriate tools. 

Activities for young visitors.

Gift and book shop

The guide for this monument can be found in the Itinéraires collection and is available in 5 languages at the gift and book shop.

Centre des monuments nationaux

Panthéon

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The honours of the Pantheon

A revolutionary place of worship

By decree dated 4 April 1791, the Constituante*, looking for a place worthy of receiving Mirabeau's remains, transformed the basilica into a temple to honour the great men of the Nation: the Pantheon was born, where Voltaire was transferred in 1791, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Marat in 1794. Rousseau, the "father of equality", lies facing his rival, Voltaire, enemy of the clergy and despots. The Revolution designated them as two emblems of the Enlightenment* whose writings ushered in the new political regime.

A political instrument of the State

Napoleon I decided to honour the great servants of the State in the crypt, while the nave was reserved for worship. In 1885, given the considerable emotion brought out by the death of Victor Hugo, this huge basilica seemed to be the only place worthy of holding his remains.

Honours were thus granted according to criteria that have evolved with changes in the regimes. Furthermore, the tombs in the crypt, the inscriptions engraved in stone or affixed in bronze lettering, have been used for another kind of homage.

Nowadays, French men and women are honoured here depending on the desires of the President of the French Republic: politicians, authors, scientists, Resistance fighters, defenders of republican values and the fatherland.

A symbol in the city

A neo-classical manifesto

The scope of the architectural project served Louis XV's political desires. Located in the heart of a quarter full of religious contestation, with the Jansenists* officiating nearby, the new building sought to re-establish the prestige of a divided church. Starting in 1763, Soufflot* designed a monumental square where a law school, built between 1771 and 1783, and a theology school rose in harmony with the church's architecture.

Greek purity and Gothic lightness



Emblematic of an architectural renewal as much as it was an experimental research project in the spirit of the Enlightenment*, Soufflot's* church forms a stylistic synthesis.



From ancient architecture, it uses the shape of a temple with colonnades, an ornamental vocabulary, the Corinthian and Tuscan orders, and the layout in the form of a Greek cross.

It uses a system of vaults, flying buttresses and the lightness of Gothic structures.

The dome is inspired by the greatest examples from the Renaissance. Soufflot* chose to flood the building with light by opening 45 high windows.

By order of the Constituante*, the architectural theorist, Quatremère de Quincy, was put in charge of transforming the church into a lay temple. He intensified the sepulchral atmosphere of the place by sealing the many windows.



Pantheon

From Christian basilica
to Temple of the Nation

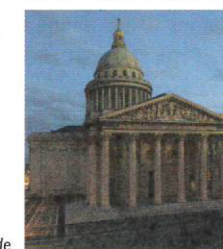
The Christian basilica

In 507, after his conversion to Christianity, King Clovis founded a first basilica designed to house his tomb and that of his wife, Clotilde. The pious Geneviève, who had protected Paris from the barbarians, was buried here in 512.

Upkeep of the Patron Saint of Paris's relics was soon entrusted to a Génovéfain chapter*.

Soufflot's masterpiece

In 1744, after a serious illness from which he said



West façade

he was cured by invoking the Saint, Louis XV made a vow to dedicate a prestigious monument to Geneviève. The project for a new basilica was entrusted to the architect Soufflot* in 1755, with the ambition of rivalling

Saint Peter's in Rome. His colleague, Rondelet, completed the building in 1790.

The National Pantheon

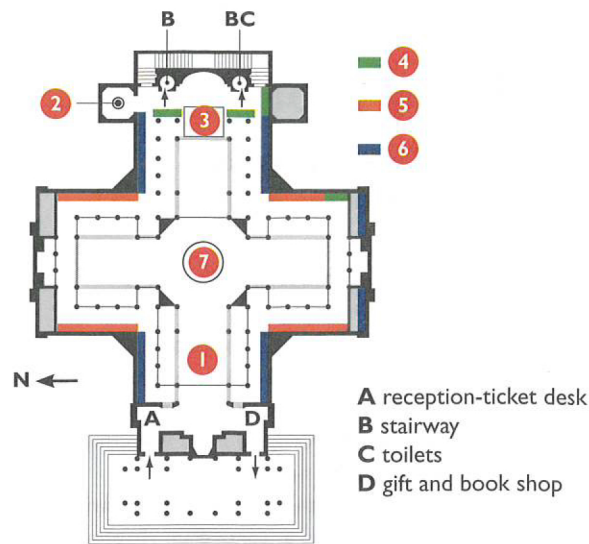


In 1791, the monument was transformed into the National Pantheon. The huge sanctuary was returned to its role as a church twice during the 19th century, before being definitively reinvested with its civic function in 1885, for Victor Hugo's funeral.

* Explanations overleaf.

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Main level

- 2** **The nave** presents a vast central volume, freed up by lines of Corinthian columns which define the side aisles. At the intersection of the transept and the nave, four pillars bear the dome's load.
- 3** **Rondelet's model** shows the superposition of the three layers forming the dome, the highest in Paris, crowned with a cross.
- 4** **La Convention nationale (The National Convention)** by Sicard, ca. 1924, shows Marianne surrounded by the soldiers of Year II* and renowned revolutionary parliamentarians. Other sculptures, around the pillars in the crossing, pay homage to events and people representing certain values. These values, born of the Enlightenment*, were to become fundamental for the Nation, notably freedom of expression embodied by *Diderot et les Encyclopédistes (Diderot and the Encyclopédistes)* and *Orateurs de la Restauration (Orators of the Restoration*)*.
- 5** **The plaques** in the chancel and the south transept are the start of the homages paid to famous persons, mainly writers who died between the two World Wars.

The walls have a painted décor on rebacked canvases* begun in 1874, in a political context in which France was divided between monarchists and republicans. This order was supervised by the director of Beaux-Arts, the Marquis de Chennevières.

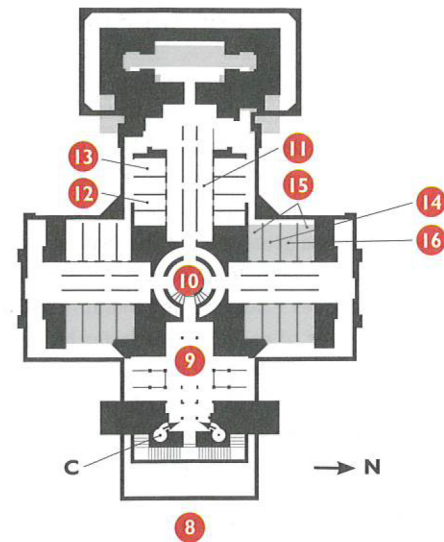
- 7** **The Christian heroes** who left their mark on France during the Ancien Régime are represented on the walls of the transept. Each painting corresponds to a major event considered as a step forward in the nation's construction and takes part in the history of France as it was idealised starting at the end of the 19th century: the *Battle of Tolbiac*, the *Coronation of Charlemagne*, the *Reform of Justice by Saint Louis* and the end of the *Hundred Years' War* with Joan of Arc.
- 8** **The cycle of the life of St Geneviève** covers the walls of the nave. It highlights the notions of sacrifice and resistance, ideas on which the different political sensitivities can agree. Artists who were famous in their day painted the exemplary actions of the Saint's life: Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898), her childhood and the *Protection of Paris under siege by the Huns*, Jean-Paul Laurens (1838-1921), her death.

- 9** **Under the dome** can be found the oldest paintings, frescoes begun under the First Empire and finished under the Restoration* by Baron Gros, depicting the Apotheosis of St Geneviève.

Staircase B leads to the crypt, where more plaques can be seen, along with the tombs of the men and women honoured by the Nation.

The crypt

- 11** **Léon Gambetta**, founder of the 3rd Republic, is honoured by an urn with his heart placed in the wall of the access stairs on 11 November 1920, the day on which a joint ceremony was held with the Unknown Soldier being buried at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.



- 9** **The vestibule** holds two emblematic philosophers of the Enlightenment* – Voltaire, defender of tolerance, is preceded by his statue by Houdon and, facing him, his rival Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the father of equality.
- 10** **The rotunda** with its thick walls gives access to the branches of the crypt where the burial vaults are located.
- 11** **Dignitaries of the Empire** were buried here by decree issued by Napoleon I and include the authors of the founding texts of the French State and institutions such as Portalis and Tronchet, authors of the Civil Code, and Perrégaux, founder of the Banque de France.
- 12** **Major authors** whose works and commitments defend the values of republican justice and tolerance: Victor Hugo, Émile Zola and Alexandre Dumas.
- 13** **Major figures in the fight for equality**, notably Victor Schoelcher, buried for the centennial of the abolition of slavery, Jean Jaurès, the father of French Socialism, assassinated in 1914, and the "Poet of Négritude", Aimé Césaire, honoured with a plaque.

- 14** **Powerful voices** gave life to democracy and civic values at the dawn of the French Revolution: Condorcet, Monge and Abbé Grégoire.
- 15** **Courage and resistance** are honoured in the north corridor: the homage begins with the plaque of the Righteous, those who helped Jews to hide during World War II. The men and women in this section showed great courage during the war. Resistance fighters and deportees to Ravensbrück, Geneviève de Gaulle Anthoinoz and Germaine Tillion continued a lifetime of commitment after 1945, placing brotherhood and equality at the heart of their concerns. Pierre Brossolette, Jean Moulin and Jean Zay, all of whom died during the war, embody different aspects of the spirit of resistance against the Nazi occupier and the Vichy regime. André Malraux, France's first Minister of Culture, is here with Jean Monnet, artisan behind the construction of the European Union, and René Cassin, principal author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948.
- 16** **Scientists**, starting with Pierre and Marie Curie, Nobel Prize recipients for their discoveries on radium, honour the notion of progress.

The west façade

The Pantheon opens out onto a monumental peristyle inspired by the Pantheon in Rome. The pediment, transformed four times since the building was erected – every time it changed uses – is now that of David d'Angers dating from 1837, *La Patrie distribuant ses récompenses (The Fatherland crowning the heroic and civic virtues)*. Voltaire and Rousseau are represented seated to the left in the composition.

* Explanations overleaf.