



Arc de Triomphe in Paris

Plans showing the outside details and inside levels with information on the Arc de Triomphe in Paris France

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English



Honouring the fallen

The idea of honouring one soldier to symbolise all those who gave their lives for their country was first put forward in 1916 during the First World War. The day after the armistice of 11 November 1918 that put an end to the conflict, the National Assembly decided to inter the body of an unidentified soldier in the Pantheon. However, veterans' associations criticised the choice of the Pantheon, and wanted a tomb that would adequately recognise the sacrifice of the 1,500,000 French soldiers who lost their lives during the Great War.

The ceremony to mark the arrival of the Unknown Soldier

On 11 November 1920, a ceremony was held to mark the arrival of the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe. He was interred under the arch on 28 January 1921. He is decorated with the Military Medal, the War Cross and the Legion of Honour*.

5 The eternal flame was lit on 11 November 1923 by André Maginot, Minister for War. It is rekindled every day at 6.30pm at a ceremony organised by the "La flamme sous l'Arc de triomphe" association.

Glossary

Appeal of 18 June 1940: appeal launched from London by General de Gaulle in 1940 during the German occupation, to unite the French people.

Attic: upper section at the top of a construction. It is placed above an entablature.

Baron Georges Haussmann (1809-1891): Prefect of the Seine from 1853 to 1870, he was responsible for major building projects that profoundly altered the Paris townscape.

Battle of Austerlitz: 2 December 1805, victory for Napoleon's Great Army over the Austro-Russian troops.

Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970): French Statesman.

Entablature: supports the upper part of the monument, and consists of the architrave, the frieze and the cornice.

François Rude (1784-1855): French sculptor and artist from the Romantic movement.

Jamb: vertical side-post on which an arch or vault rests.

Legion of Honour: the highest French ceremonial decoration, introduced by Napoleon I.

Practical information

Average length of visit: 40 minutes

Bookshop-gift shop

The guide for this monument can be found in the *Itinéraires* collection in the bookshop-gift shop in six different languages and in the *Regards...* collection in three languages.

Centre des monuments nationaux
Arc de triomphe
27 rue Vernet
75008 Paris
tél. **01 55 37 73 77**

www.paris-arc-de-triomphe.fr

www.monuments-nationaux.fr

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Arc de Triomphe

An important patriotic site

To the Glory of the Great Army

After the Battle of Austerlitz*, Napoleon I proclaimed to his army: "Soldiers! I am pleased with you. [...] I shall bring you back to France; there you will be the object of my tenderest attentions [...] and all you will have to say is *I was at the Battle of Austerlitz**, for them to reply, *There goes a brave man*." On his return to Paris, he ordered the building of an Arch of Triumph to the glory of the Great Army. The monument had to fit in with the improvement works taking place in the capital at the same time and flatter the Emperor's taste for Roman antiquity. Napoleon wanted to build it on the site of the Bastille, in the East of Paris, the side on which the armies returned, but the Place de l'Étoile was eventually preferred.

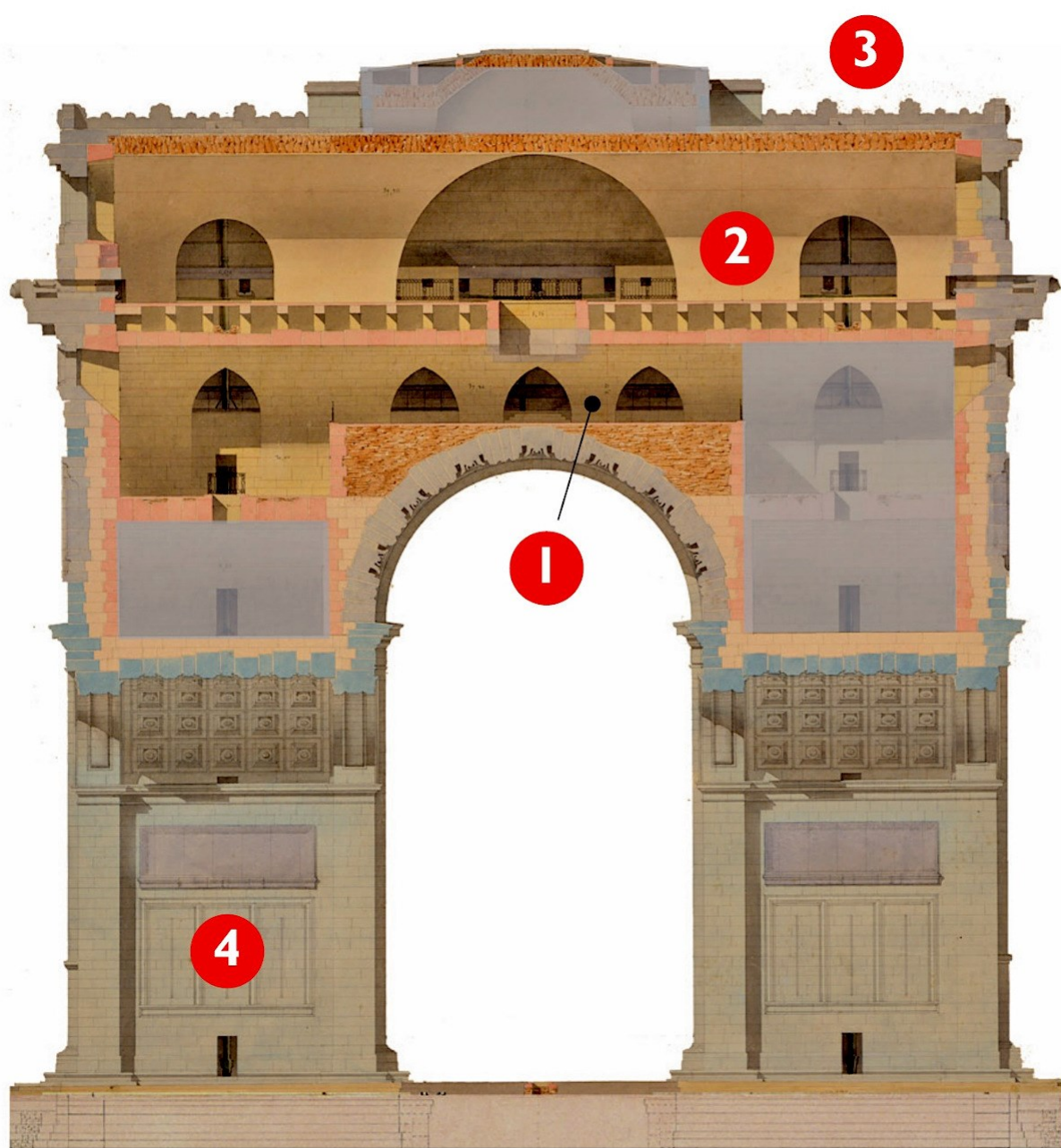
Its location was ideal: at the end of the Avenue des



Champs-Élysées, opposite the Palais des Tuileries, the Emperor's Paris residence. Unhindered by any other building projects, the square completed the axis designed by Le Nôtre in the 17th century, extending the central walkway of the Tuileries gardens as far as the horizon.

Jean-François-Thérèse Chalgrin was the monument's chief architect.

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3 The terrace

From the terrace, the dominant situation of the Arc in the centre of the Place de l'Étoile can be appreciated. This square owes its name to the layout of the streets and the avenues that join them up. Although the initial 17th century plans had eight streets, the final layout of the square commissioned by Baron Haussmann* from the architect Jacques Ignace Hittorff resulted in 12 avenues radiating out from the centre. The square was renamed Place Charles de Gaulle* in 1970.

The platform

4 The walls of the arches are engraved with the names of battles and Generals from wars fought by France during the Revolution and under the Empire. The soldiers whose names are underlined died on the battlefield.

5 On the ground, the inscriptions commemorate more recent events: the proclamation of the Republic on 4 September 1870, the return of Alsace and Lorraine to France in 1918, the memory of



the soldiers who died during the 1939-1945 war, the Appeal of 18 June 1940* by General de Gaulle*, the student demonstration on 11 November 1940 during the Occupation and those who died for France in the wars of Indochina, Algeria and Korea.

6-7 The sculpted groups on the jambs* each represent a year. François Rude* created the most famous of these, *Le Départ des Volontaires* (**6**) known as *La Marseillaise*, facing the Champs-Élysées. It depicts the departure of 200,000 volunteers in 1792 to defend the young Republic: a winged woman, the Genius of Liberty, exhorts the people to fight. The other sculpted groups can be read chronologically by moving round the monument in a clockwise direction. They depict *La gloire de Napoléon* (1810) by Jean-Pierre Cortot (**7**), followed by *La résistance* (1814) and *La paix* (1815) by Antoine Etex on the Avenue de la Grande-Armée side. **8 Six high-relief** sculptures above the jambs* depict famous episodes from the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, in particular the Battle of Austerlitz*, on the Northern side.

More information on the Arc de Triomphe

[Arc de Triomphe article](#)

[Arc de Triomphe history](#)

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[Unknown Soldier and Eternal Flame](#)

Scene of national events

While under construction from 1806 to 1836, the Arc de Triomphe was subject to the whims of political changes and the struggles for influence by the architects succeeding each other at the head of the project.

After coming to power following the July Revolution in 1830, Louis-Philippe I, King of France, wanted a reminder of his military career in the armies of the Revolution and tried to manipulate the partisans of the Empire. The monument's dedication was changed one last time, and the iconography was designed to glorify the armies of the Revolution and the Empire.

Inaugurated in 1836, the monument later bore witness to major national events such as the return of Napoleon I's ashes in 1840, the vigil for the funeral of Victor Hugo in 1885 and the First World War victory parade by the Allies on 14 July 1919.

1 Mezzanine floor

The mezzanine floor can be accessed from the entablature* after climbing 202 steps. There are a further 82 steps to the top.

2 The attic room*

Over the various building projects, the attic room* was removed to simplify construction, then restored to support the crowns of the monument, work on which flourished after 1834. Four plaster crowns were temporarily built *in situ*, but were never permanently constructed. On the walls, bronze wreaths represent tributes added at the time of the interment of the Unknown Soldier under the monument's arch.

