



Conciergerie

Royal residence and prison

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In the 6th century, Clovis, the king of the Franks, established his royal residence on the Ile de la Cité. Five centuries later, Hugues Capet, the first Capetian king, established his council and administration at the Palais de la Cité, thus making it the seat of royal power.

Symbol of royal power



In the 13th century, Saint Louis initiated major renovation and enhancement work on the palace, with the construction of the Sainte-Chapelle.

In the 14th century, continuing his grandfather's work, Philip IV the Fair had the palace remodelled to make it a prestigious monarchical symbol, where the Parliament of Paris* began to meet.

From a Royal residence to a Palace of Justice

In the late 14th century, Charles V took up residence at the Hôtel Saint-Pol, near the Bastille as well as the *châteaux* of the Louvre and Vincennes. He then appointed a steward or "Concierge" vested with judicial powers to administer the palace and prison. It then took on a judicial role, and part of the palace was converted into prison cells. Many prisoners of the State were incarcerated here. During the French Revolution, the Conciergerie became a major place of detention with the establishment of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Its most famous prisoner was Marie-Antoinette.

* Explanations overleaf.

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Glossary

Capital: cut or carved stone placed at the top of a column as the upright support of an arch.
Exceptional justice: a justice system overriding common law established during major political crises and civil wars in France.

Héloïse and Abélard: early 12th century protagonists of a now legendary tragic love story.

Lit de justice: a meeting of the Parliament presided by the king who would invoke his authority.

Oratory: a place of prayer.

Parliament of Paris: dispensed justice in the king's name and served as a court of appeal for all the kingdom's jurisdictions until 1790. It also recorded and released royal decrees (laws).

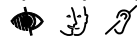
Reign of Terror: period during the French Revolution (March 1793 – summer 1794) when the Republic, threatened by both foreign and civil war, was converted into a Dictatorship of Public Safety.

Twin: divided into two by a column.

Practical information

Average length of visit: 1 ¼ hours.

Specially-adapted guided tours for disabled visitors.



Gift and book shop

The guide for this monument can be found in the *Itinéraires* collection and is available in 7 languages in the gift and book shop.

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But in summer 1794, more and more French people wanted to see an end to this period of repression that would later become known as the Reign of Terror*. After Robespierre, who represented the Dictatorship of Public Safety, Fouquier-Tinville, the public prosecutor, was in turn executed. A few months later, the ordinary justice system was resumed. It was then set a new political task: putting an end to the Revolution.

10 The chapel. Located on the site of the king's medieval oratory*, the prisoners' chapel was also used as a shared cell during the Revolution. Close to the expiatory chapel, this place is also quite marked by the memory of the queen.

During her 76 days of imprisonment, Marie-Antoinette was closely guarded. She even had to change cells after a failed attempt to free her. Held on 15 and 16 October 1793, her trial was one of the Revolution's highest profile trials. After her execution, a number of objects supposedly having belonged to her were carefully preserved as authentic remnants of her final hours.

11 The expiatory chapel of Marie-Antoinette. Converted in 1815 during the Restoration by order of Louis XVIII, Louis XVI's younger brother, the chapel is located on the very site of the queen's cell.

12 The women's courtyard. Bordered by two floors of dungeons, the courtyard was used by female prisoners to take daytime walks.

* Explanations overleaf.

Medieval rooms

Other than the Sainte-Chapelle, the lower parts of the palace are all that remain of the medieval royal residence. These were reserved for the king's guard and the substantial staff (including clerks, officers and servants) that served the needs of the king and his family, totalling around 2,000 people.

1 Salle des Gens d'Armes. Constructed in 1302 during the reign of Philip the Fair, this "hall of the soldiers" is a unique example of Gothic civil architecture. Composed of four naves with ribbed vaulting, it was well lit through twin* windows, remnants of which can still be seen. Four fireplaces heated this vast refectory. On the left wall, a fragment of black marble table is displayed. This table was used during sumptuous receptions given by the Capetian monarchy in the palace's great ceremonial hall upstairs, which is no longer standing.

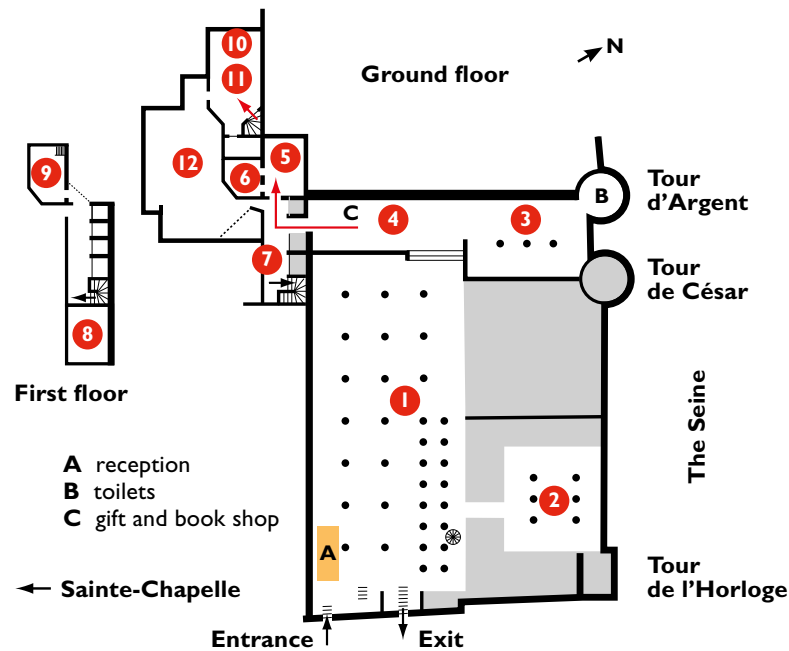
2 The kitchens. Built during the reign of John the Good (1350-1364), the kitchens were used to prepare meals for the king's staff. Supplies would be brought in directly by boat.

3 Salle des Gardes. Built together with the Salle des Gens d'Armes, this guardroom was an antechamber to the Grand'chambre that once stood upstairs, where Parliament used to sit under the Old Regime. The king held lits de justice* here. The Revolutionary Tribunal moved here in 1793. The capital* of the central pillar seems to depict Héloïse and Abélard*.

4 La Rue de Paris. This area was once part of the Salle des Gens d'Armes, but was later isolated and raised. It bears the name of Monsieur de Paris, the executioner's nickname.

The revolutionary rooms

In 1789, the Parliament was removed. The Palais de la Cité was placed under the authority of the Mayor of Paris, but it remained a tribunal and prison.



In spring 1793, the palace housed the main institution for exceptional justice*: the Revolutionary Tribunal, which had been set up to try political crimes.

5 Paris and the French Revolution. Between 1789 and 1799, France was immersed in a revolution. This led to the fall of the monarchy and the founding of the First Republic. Above all, this profoundly changed society and the way people thought of their place in the world. Because it was the location of the main places of power, attracted the attention of all of Europe, and its inhabitants were particularly active in their involvement, the city of Paris played a central role in events.

6 The Conciergerie and the Revolution. During the Revolution, the Ile de la Cité continued to be one of the centres of political life in the capital. When civil war broke out in France, the prison quickly filled with many "suspects", accused of threatening the Republic. An animated model of the Conciergerie lets you follow the daily lives of prisoners whose conditions

of detention depended on their financial resources. This meant that the poorest had to sleep on straw in shared cells, while some were afforded relative comfort, for a price.

7 The prisoners' corridor. On the left is the desk of the clerk, who was responsible for recording prisoner details. In the centre is the office of the concierge, the prison director. On the right is the Grooming Room where the prisoners would have their hair cut before execution.

Located on the site of a former corridor, the series of three linked cells were made in 1989, during the Bicentennial of the French Revolution. This was also the case for the cells on the 1st floor, a reminder of the difficult conditions of detention at the time.

8 Salle des Noms. These walls feature the names of over 4,000 people tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal between 1793 and 1795. Whether they were executed, acquitted or sentenced to other sanctions they all spent at least a few days in the Conciergerie. A multimedia display provides access to information on prisoner biographies, their portraits and extracts from their criminal records.

9 Justice and the Revolution. These four rooms depict changes to the justice system during the Revolution. In 1789, revolutionaries reformed the justice system of the Old Regime, making it more egalitarian and humane. However in 1793, mounting threats against the Republic led them to set up a Dictatorship of Public Safety: a temporary dictatorship implemented as a group, which was intended to save the young regime. To try the actions of those who threatened the Republic, an exceptional justice* system was established. The Revolutionary Tribunal was its main instrument. Located in the palace above the prisons of the Conciergerie, it hosted the more significant political trials.

* Explanations overleaf.