

Les Invalides & Napoleon's Tomb: Paris's Monument to Soldiers and Empire



Founded by Louis XIV in 1670 as a home for wounded and aging soldiers, Les Invalides later became the resting place of Napoleon I beneath one of Paris's most recognizable domes. Few Parisian sites gather so many layers of power, ritual and remembrance in one architectural ensemble. This guided visit reads the façades and courtyards, enters the Soldiers' Church conceived for everyday worship, then crosses to the royal chapel crowned by the Dôme—transformed in the 19th century into a military pantheon where Napoleon's tomb anchors a carefully staged narrative of battles and civil achievements.

At a glance

- Location: Hôtel national des Invalides, 7th arrondissement, Paris
- Founding purpose: Commissioned by Louis XIV in 1670 to house and care for France's wounded, sick, disabled and elderly soldiers
- Architects: Libéral Bruant (initial complex) and Jules HardouinMansart (from 1676, notably the churches)
- Twin churches: The Soldiers' Church (SaintLouis) and the royal chapel (Église du Dôme) form a paired religious complex with distinct spaces
- Dôme timeline: Royal chapel built 1677–1706; later adapted as a military necropolis
- Main Courtyard: The Cour d'honneur remains a central space and displays a large part of the artillery and monumental sculpture collections
- Memorial atmosphere: The SaintLouis Cathedral is associated with historic displays of flags and trophies beneath its vaults
- Napoleon's tomb: Remains transferred to Les Invalides in 1840; laid to rest under the Dôme on April 2, 1861

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