

Another Paris (6-9 June 2026)



C-J. Vernet, *Marine, landscape and sunset*, 1753 (own photo)

Note: all photos are mine, except otherwise specified.

Saturday 6 June 2026

Thanks to the TGV, I arrived before 10:00 that morning in *Gare de l'Est*, one of the railways stations in Paris. I was visiting Chantal, an old friend who lives in Champigny, in the South-East suburbs of the French capital. When I arrived at her house, we decided to have lunch and spend the afternoon in **Vincennes**, near Paris, a place where I had never been before.

We had a nice lunch at the restaurant *La Table des Troys*, which is facing the Castle.¹ As the rain had finally stopped when we went out, we decided to have a go at the Castle... and we did not regret it!

From the outside, this is a massive building, enclosed in its fortified walls and towers (there is a map of the site next page). Internet website: <https://www.chateau-de-vincennes.fr/en>

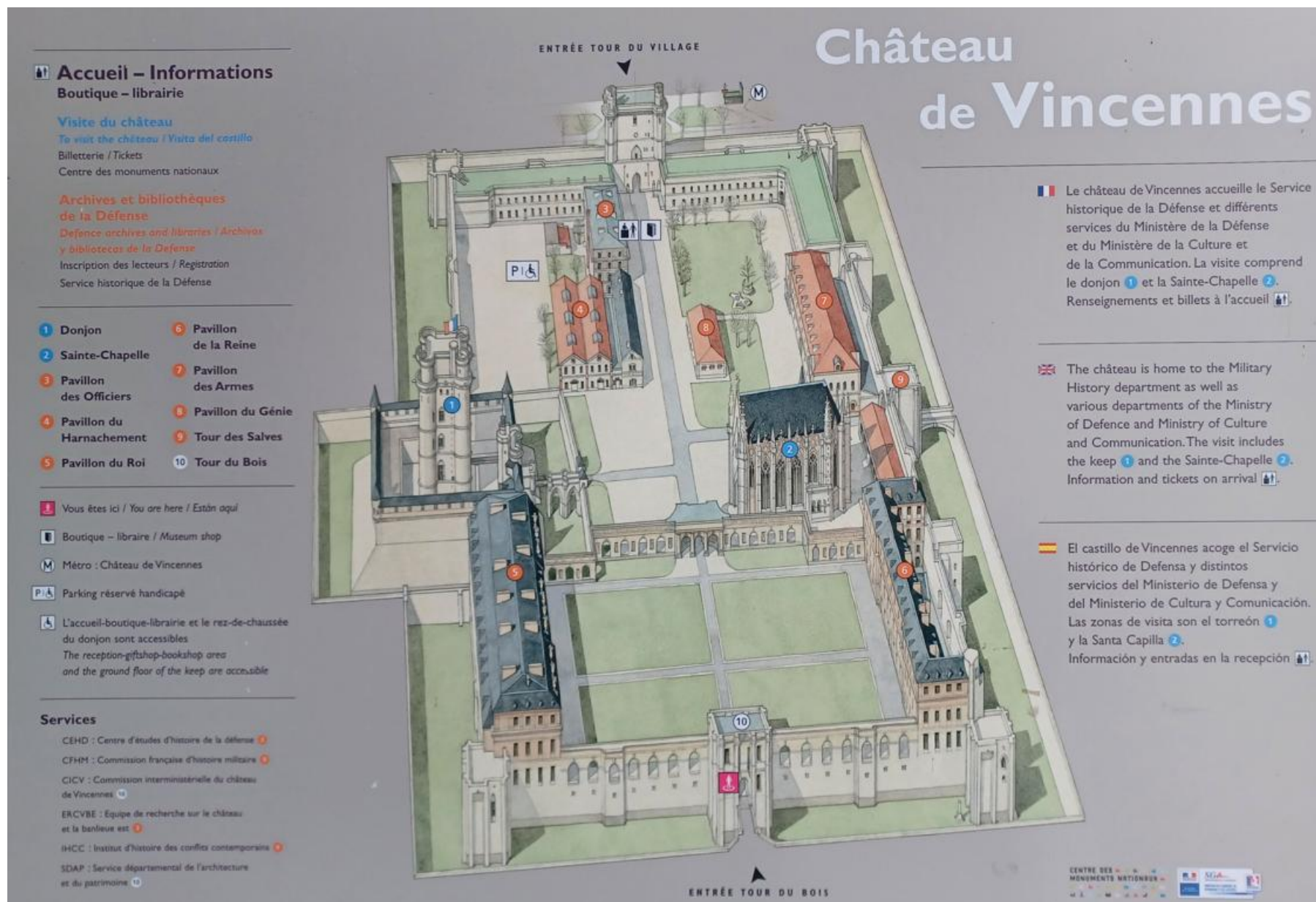
The Capetian monarchs established a hunting lodge in the forest of Vincennes in the 12th century. At the start of the Hundred Years' War, John II, known as John the Good (r. 1350-1364) initiated work on a keep nearby, which his son, Charles V (r.1364-1380), completed circa 1370. His great plan was to transform Vincennes into a real fortified city: a protective wall with nine towers was then built around the keep and manor. At the time of Charles V's death, work on the Holy Chapel had just begun. During the troubled periods in the 16th and 17th centuries, the French monarchs took refuge behind the huge castle walls. Further building work marked the presence of Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715) before he finally settled in Versailles. During the Revolution, the place became a major arsenal, which was later consolidated by Napoleon I. He had seven of the wall towers levelled to hold canons when he converted Vincennes into a military stronghold.

So, entering Vincennes Castle allows you to travel back in time and visit three different periods of French history thanks to the medieval donjon, the Renaissance Chapel and the classical pavilions.



A view of the Castle from the *Avenue de Paris*, in Vincennes.

¹ See their website: <https://www.la-table-des-troys.com/>



Map of the Castle

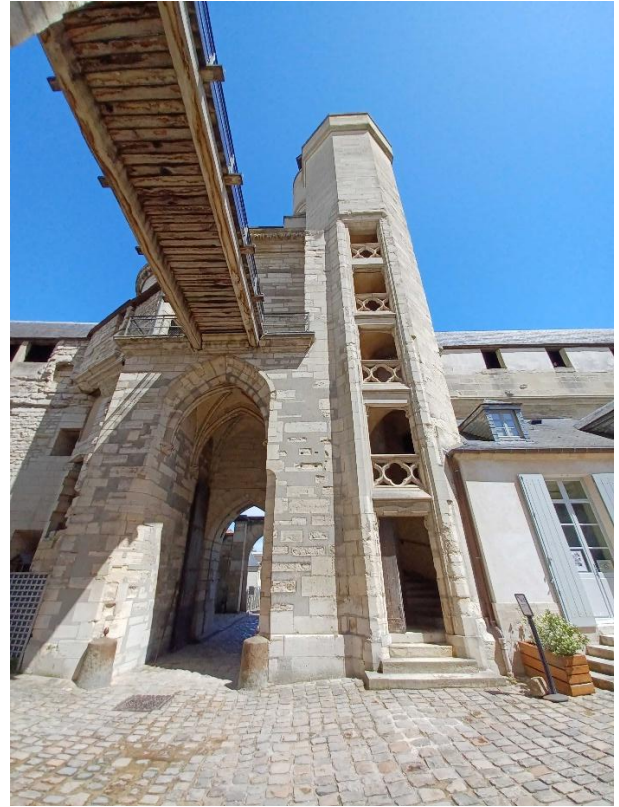
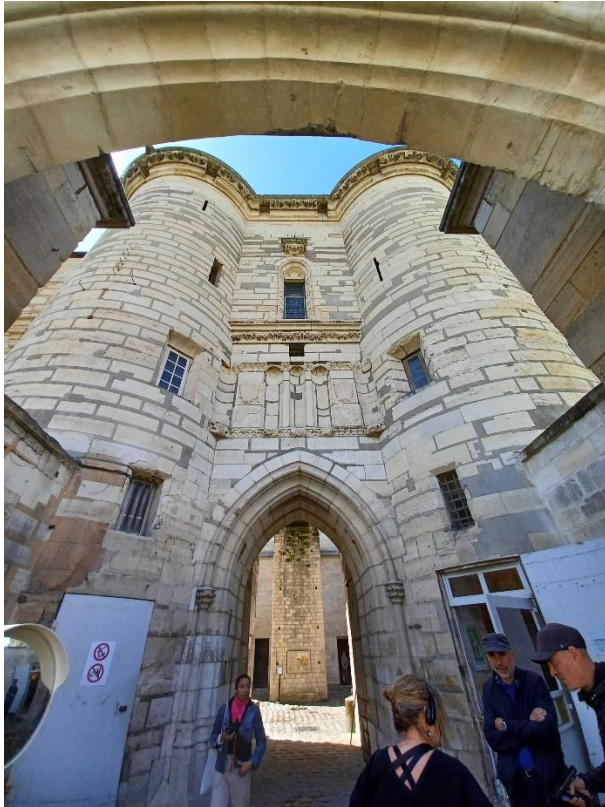
The access to this site is free, but you need to buy a ticket to visit the donjon and the Holy Chapel. We entered the fortified place through the Village Tower, the original main gate which still stands at its original height. Its exterior façade was once adorned with statues.



The Village Tower, as seen from outside (left) and inside the walls



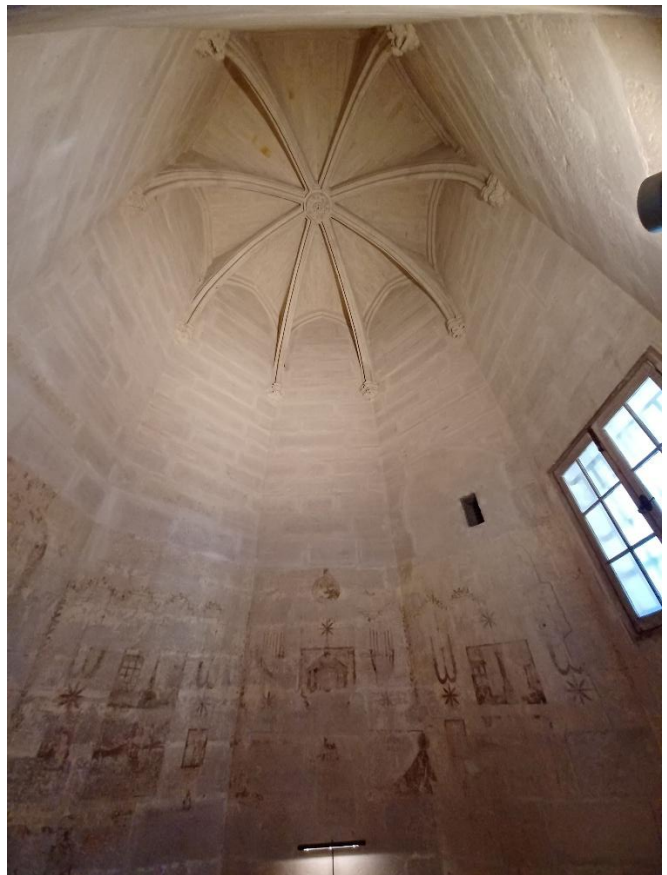
The chatelet at the entrance of the medieval keep



The chatelet (gateway) leading to the courtyard, and the outwork stairway opposite the keep: the footbridge was the only way into the keep in the Middle Ages



The keep: at present you can visit the first two floors including the council room, the bedchamber of the king and the treasure room.



Once a Chapel under Charles V, this room was painted by prisoners when the keep became a prison in the 16th century, and the tower rooms were converted into cells.

Charles V was a great music lover, and musicians would come and play for him every day. Three musician angels, coming from the outside wall of the keep, are displayed in one of the rooms:



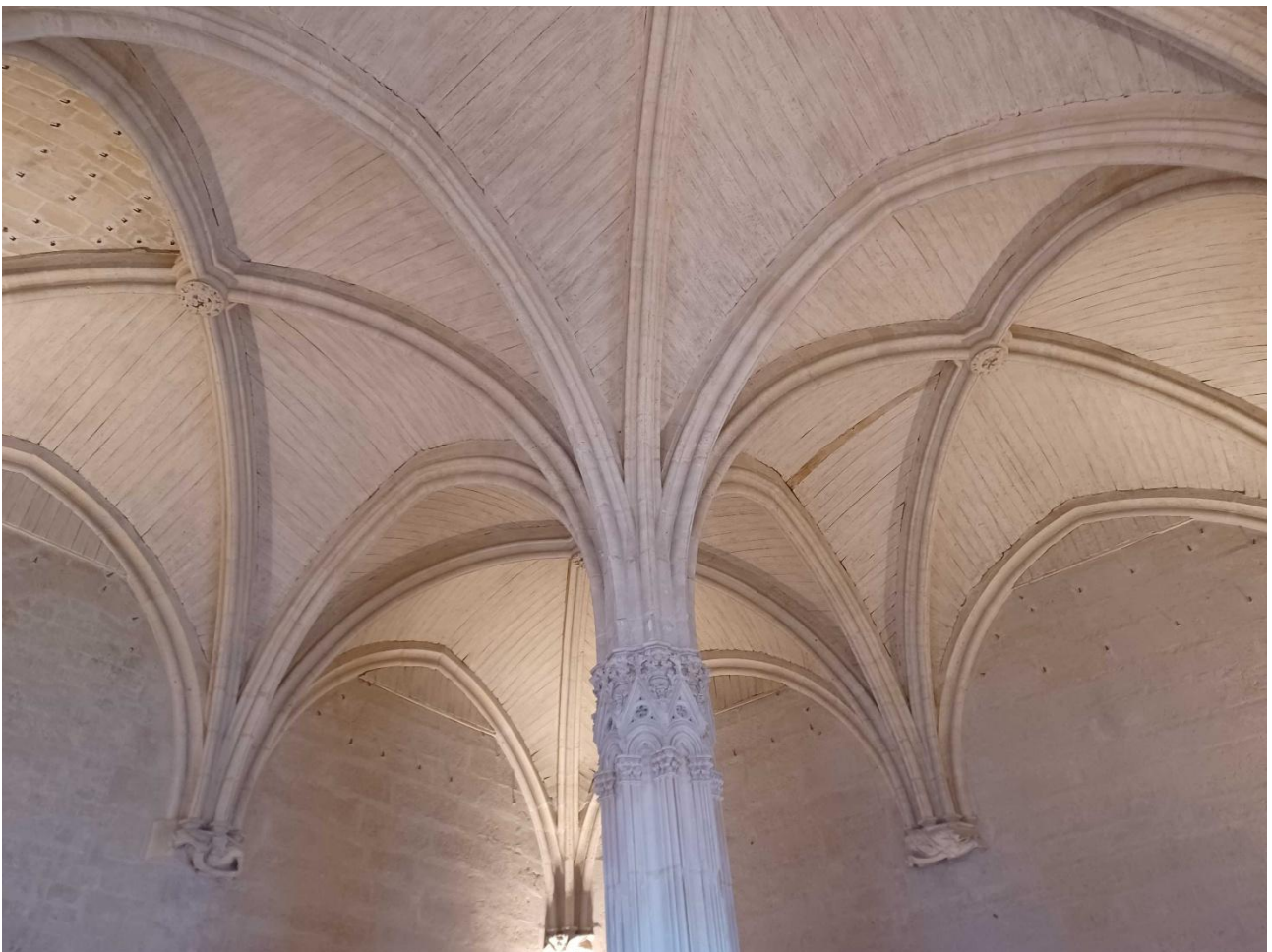
Angel with a hurdy gurdy



Angel with a portative organ



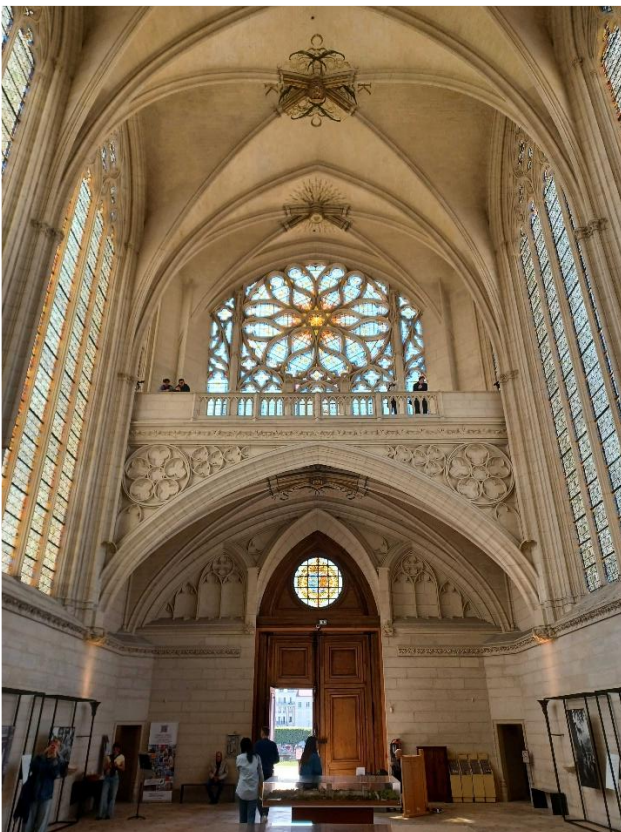
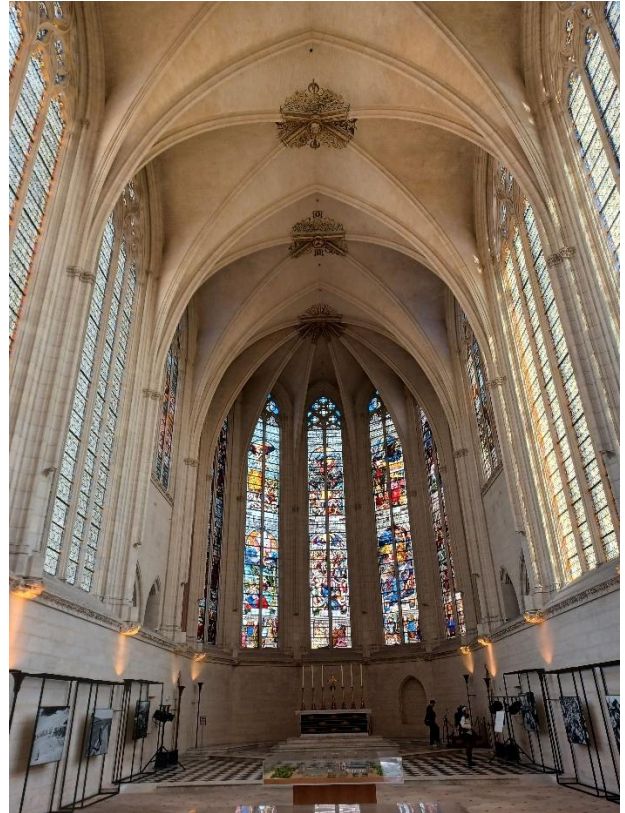
Angel with bagpipes



The King's bedchamber: detail of a carved pillar and the vaulted ceiling.

The bedchamber was entirely wood-panelled: the iron hooks still visible were used to fix these wood panels covering the walls and the ceiling. Interestingly, the wood came from Baltic oak trees 250 years old when they were felled between 1367 and 1371. The choice of this durable wood has ensured its partial conservation until today.

We then visited the Holy Chapel, a gem of Renaissance architecture. Founded by Charles V in 1379, the work was only completed a century later, under Henry II (r. 1547-1559). Though it has only one floor, the chapel was modelled on the *Sainte-Chapelle* of the *Palais de la Cité* in Paris. The sculptures on the west gate show the skill of the early 15-th century stoneworkers



The classical pavilions are part of the major work carried out at the requests of Mazarin, then of Louis XIV. The perfectly symmetrical King's pavilion on the right and the Queen's on the left, the openings made in the south rampart, the *Le Bois* Tower converted into a victory arch and the arcades, all the elements combine to form a coherent group in the classical French style.



View of the Holy Chapel, the arcades and part of the Queen's pavilion



Queen's pavilion



Le Bois Tower converted into a Victory Arch



View of the King's pavilion and the keep behind the classical arcades

Vincennes is a very busy town, especially on a Saturday afternoon, so you should avoid going there with a car. From Paris, it is very easy to go there with the tube, line 1, or the RER-A.

Sunday 7 June 2026

A few days before I had bought tickets to an exhibition, entitled *Visages d'Artistes (Artists' Faces)* at the [Petit Palais](#) and booked a time slot to visit it that morning.



Petit Palais' main entrance



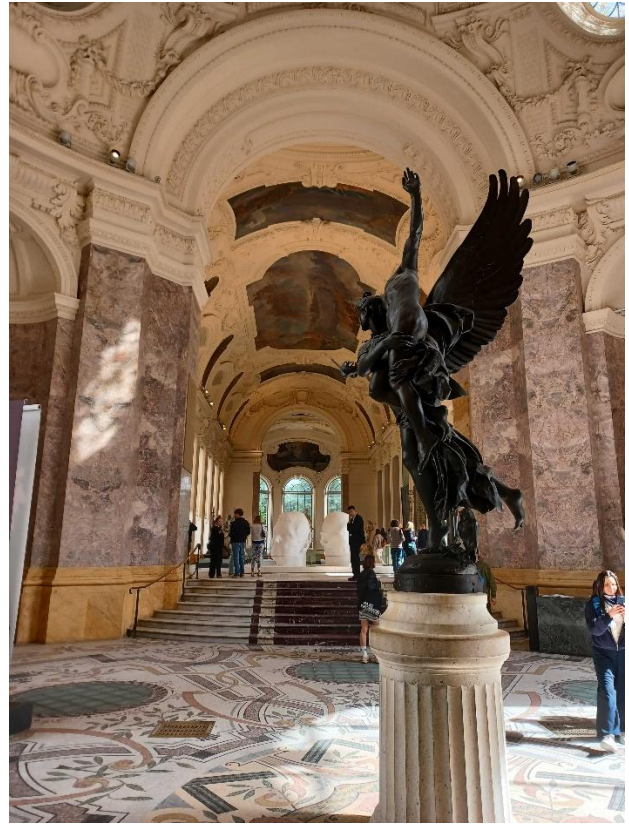
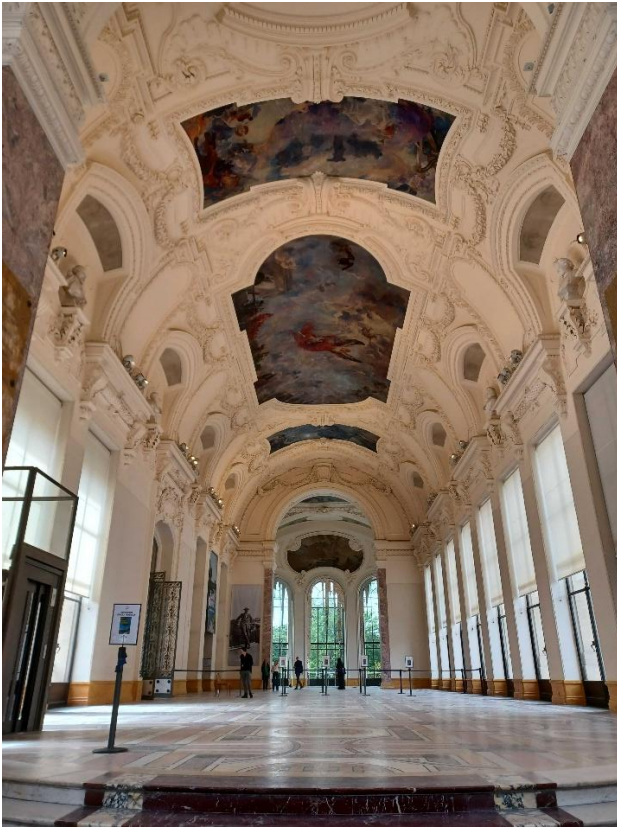
Avenue Winston Churchill: view on Alexandre III bridge and the *Hotel des Invalides* in the background.

Built for the 1900 Universal Exhibition, like its neighbour the Grand Palais on avenue Winston Churchill, the Petit Palais is a splendid building, worth a visit for its architecture as well as its fine arts collections. Interestingly, access to its permanent collections is free—quite a rarity in Parisian museums.



The main entrance of the Grand Palais, just across the avenue

I enjoyed the temporary exhibition *Artists' faces - From Gustave Courbet to Annette Messager*. I only took a few photos of the works which drew my attention but bought the catalogue in the museum shop afterwards. Here below is a small selection of these photos.



One of the exhibited works which surprised me the most was a bust sculpted by Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923), the famous tragedian. I did not know she was also a sculptor.



Gustave Courbet, *Self-portrait with a black dog*, 1842-44
Petit Palais (public domain)²



J-J. Henner, *Germaine Dawis*, 1892



Sarah Bernhardt, *Georges Clairin*, ca. 1875



Louise Breleau, *Jean Carries in his workshop*, 1886-87

After visiting this exhibition, I had a quick look into the permanent collections, where I spotted a few medieval items, including a 15th-century sculpture of *St Georges and the Dragon*, and two 14th-century ivory diptychs representing scenes of the *Passion of Christ* (see below):

² Source : https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autoportrait_au_chien_noir

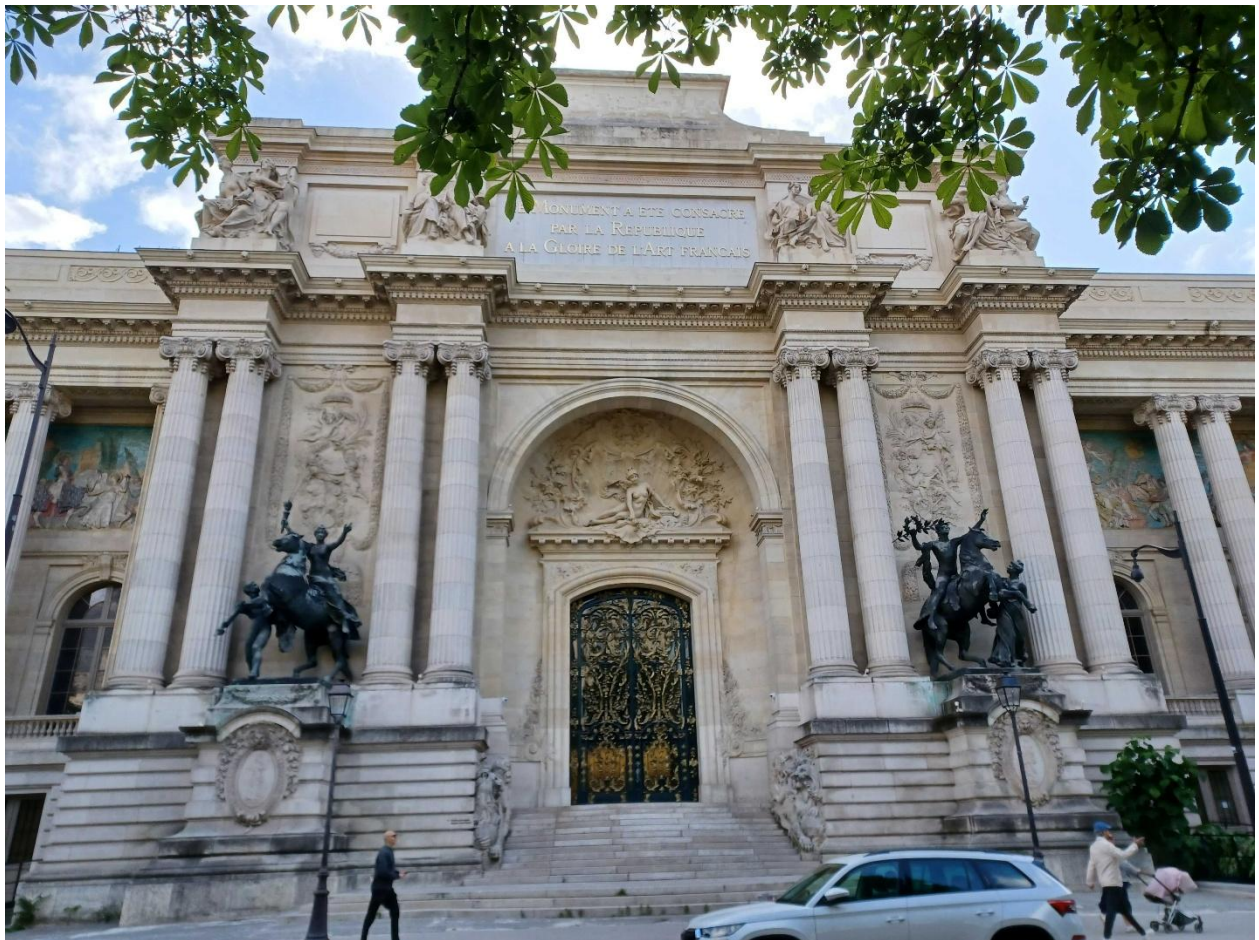
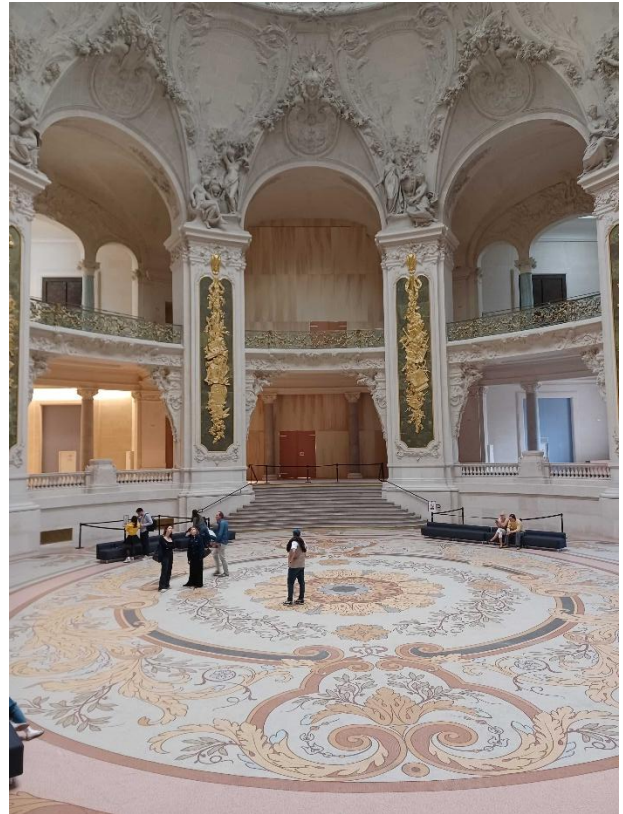
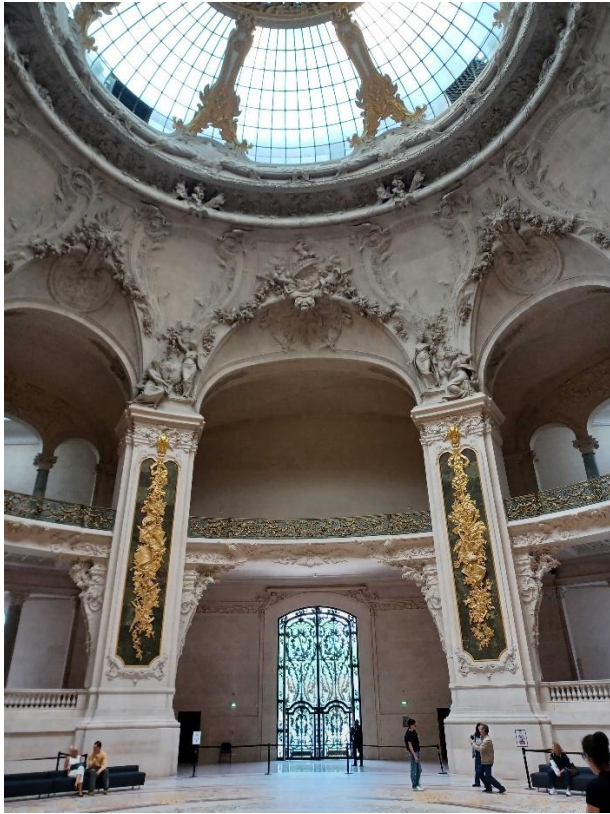


After this visit, my friend and I decided to try the restaurant *Réséda Café*, located into the Grand Palais, and have a look at this emblematic monument. Indeed, after four years of renovation, the Grand Palais reopened in June 2025, reinventing itself as “a living place open to all, where culture is celebrated in all its forms.” See more on its website: <https://www.grandpalais.fr/en/grand-palais>. Even if you don’t want to visit a temporary exhibition, access to this awesome building is free, and from the restaurant on the first floor you have a view onto one of its halls. The menu there was quite expensive, but there is also a café which seems more affordable, though quite busy at lunchtime.



A Lego model of the *Grand Palais*: view of the grand façade on Avenue Wilson

After lunch we visited some of the freely accessible areas, which allowed us to discover the remarkable architecture of this monument. From the hall including the museum shops, we strolled to the *Rotonde d'Antin*, a lavishly decorated round reception room—not yet fully renovated. The wrought iron door leads to the avenue Roosevelt at the back of the building.



Another grandiose façade of the Grand Palais on the avenue Roosevelt.

That afternoon I said goodbye to my friend, who drove me to Bois-Colombe, an agreeable town in the northwest suburbs of Paris, where lives a cousin of mine, and her family. Later in the afternoon, she showed me some of the charming spots of her area, including green parks and quiet alleys, leading to pavilions and old mansions. Another asset of this town is its proximity to Paris: it is only a 10 min journey from the local train station to St Lazare, a major transport hub of the French capital.

Monday 8 June 2026

That morning we headed to the Trocadero and its museums. A few years ago, I had visited the *Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine* in the *Palais de Chaillot*, the grand Art-Deco monument on the Trocadero. This time, I seized the opportunity of a temporary exhibition celebrating the 400th anniversary of the French Navy, to go and visit the *Musée National de la Marine* in Paris, where I had never been before (there are other national museums of the French Navy in provincial towns). You will find more information on: <https://www.musee-marine.fr/en/our-museums/paris.html>.

Karine, my cousin, had bought tickets and reserved a time slot to visit this exhibition, entitled *The Navy and Painters. Four Centuries of Art and Power*, and dedicated to the painters who, from the 17th to the 20th century, shaped the visual representation of naval history.

Here is a small, subjective selection of the paintings which drew my eye more than others:



Le Lorrain, *View of a port with the Capitol*, ca. 1636. The precision of his art and the poetry of his marine paintings have made Le Lorrain THE reference for the following generations of marine painters (see front page and next page).



Adrien Manglard, *Moonlight*, 18th century



Antoine Lebel, *Sunset*, 1748



Theodore Géricault, fourth draft for the painting *Raft of the Medusa*, first half of the 19th century.



Horace Vernet, *Cholera outbreak onboard the Melpomene*, 1834.

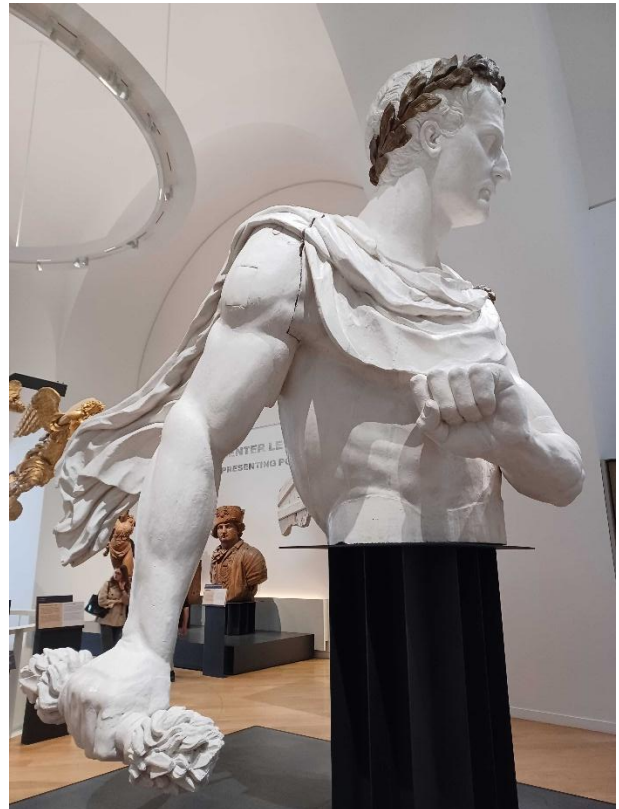


Gustave Courbet, *The Wave*, ca. 1870

I also noticed an aquarelle by Emmanuel Lepage (born in 1966), entitled *Moby Dick* (2021), but did not manage to take a proper photo of it. After visiting this exhibition, we then explored some other areas of the museum.



Lens from the Hourlin lighthouse (France), 1894



Napoleon I, figurehead from the *l'Éna*, ca. 1846



Golden decoration of the *Réale*, the biggest royal galley under the reign of King Louis XIV

After our visit, Karine suggested that we had lunch in an Italian restaurant nearby, Bambini, at the Palais de Tokyo. For more information, see their website: [Bambini - Palais de Tokyo](https://www.bambini-paris.com/). Though prices are a little expensive, we enjoyed having a nice meal on the terrace outdoor. After lunch we decided to walk back to St Lazare railway station, merely enjoying the promenade in Paris' streets.



The magnificent Art Deco style of the *Palais de Tokyo*

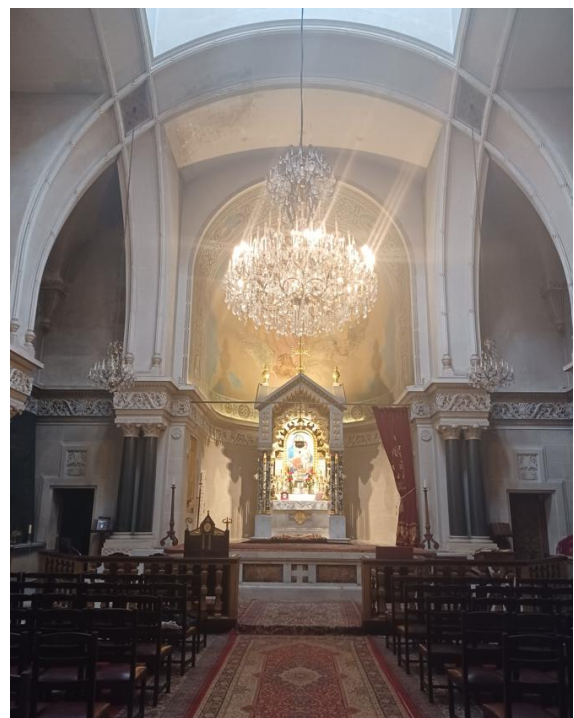


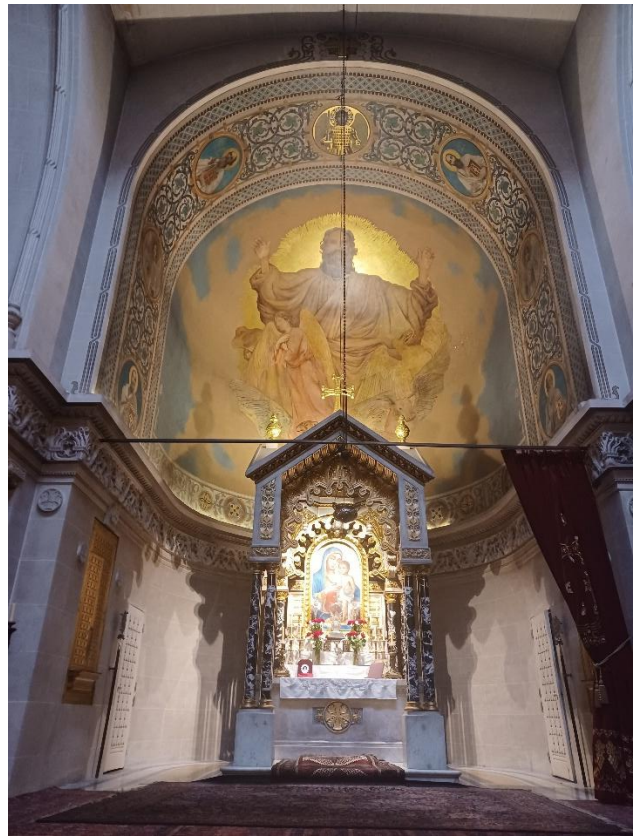
View of the Eiffel Tower across the River Seine



David Erevantzi, *Monument in Honour of Komitas*, 2003

We followed the banks of the River Seine, passing by the *Esplanade d'Arménie*, and stopping to pay homage to the statue of Komitas, and to all that this monument represents to our family. The *Monument in Honor of Komitas* is a memorial to the Armenian victims of the 1915 genocide and to the Armenian soldiers who died fighting for France. As the Cathedral St John the Baptist was very close from there, I also seized this opportunity to visit the diocese of the Armenian Church in Paris.





I was quite moved to visit this lovely church, stay a moment to immerse myself into its quiet atmosphere and remember my family's roots.

On our way back to the train station, Avenue Montaigne, I could not help taking a picture of one of the first Art Deco style buildings in Paris, the *Theatre des Champs Elysées* (1913):



Tuesday, 9 June 2026

Tuesday is a black day for tourists in Paris, and more generally, in France: most museums are closed that day. Fortunately, the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs*, rue de Rivoli, is not! See more on their website:

<https://madparis.fr/musee-des-arts-decoratifs>

So, Karine and I went there to visit a temporary exhibition, entitled *A Day in the 18th Century – Chronicle of a Parisian Townhouse* (see: <https://madparis.fr/Une-journee-au-XVIIIe-siecle-chronique-d-un-hotel-particulier>). Not only was this exhibition well organised, immersing the visitor into a real-life experience, with sounds and odours completing each tableau, but they also provided us with useful leaflets, guiding us through this purpose-built 18th century Parisian house.

Here below is a small selection of a few items which surprised or interested me:



Mechanical scene by Desmares, clockmaker, and Nicholas Spayermant, painter. Versailles, 1739



Philippe Meusnier, *Façade of a garden pavilion*, c. 1730



P.A. Baudouin, *Reading*, c. 1765



Nicholas JB Raguenet, *The Pont Neuf and the Samaritaine Pump from the Quai de la Mégisserie in Paris*, 1755



Table dressed for a 18th century banquet

After visiting this exhibition, my cousin and I split, each of us being interested by different areas in this museum. She visited another temporary exhibition and the jewels rooms; I went to the floor dedicated to the Renaissance:



Scene of Battle and Scene of Triumph, attributed to the workshop of Paolo Uccello, Florence, ca. 1466



Detail of the ships in the *Scene of Battle* above



Yellow tapestry with grotesques (Florence 1572), and a series of six seats, carved with masks and bowls of fruits (Venice, 16th century)

I saw several other items which were useful for my present research and took some more photos. But soon it was time to leave the museum, go back to Bois-Colombes to have lunch, and fetch my suitcase. After I kissed goodbye to my cousin, I took the direction of the *Gare St Lazare*, then *Gare de l'Est* to take my train back to Nancy.

What a wonderful stay in Paris! Thank you Chantal & Karine!