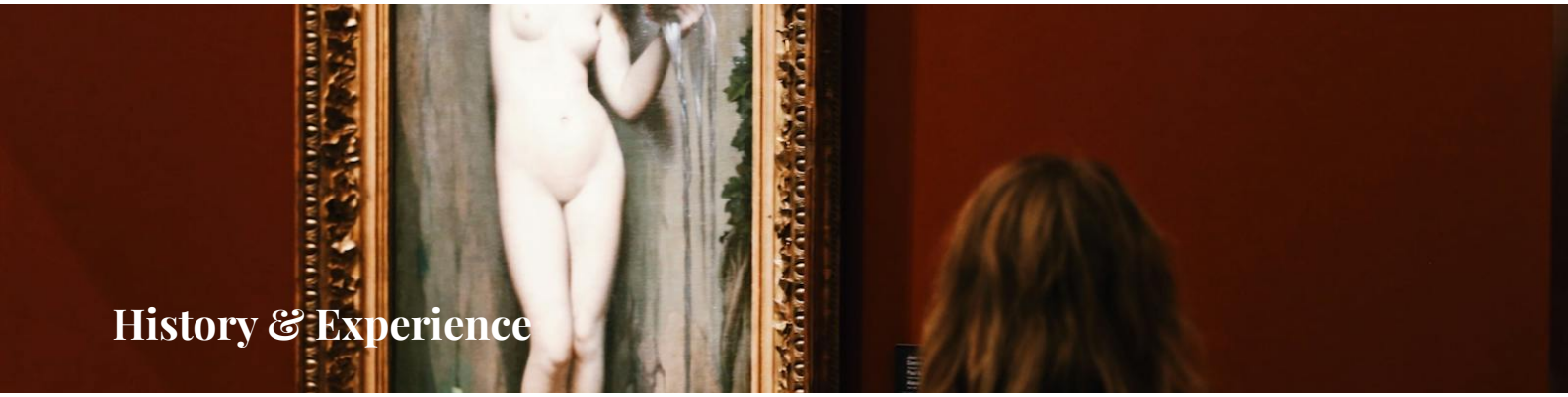


OFFICIAL VISIT GUIDE 2026

the Musée d'Orsay

Paris · From 13€

https://musee-orsay.visit-tickets.com/en/ · Skip-the-Line Tickets & Official Prices



History & Experience

ORIGIN & HISTORY

From Railway Station to Art Temple

GOOGLE 4.8 ★★★★★ 113 881 {pdf_label(lang, 'reviews')}

TIQETS 4.7 ★★★★★ 17 199 {pdf_label(lang, 'reviews')}

The Musée d'Orsay occupies a building of extraordinary historical significance, originally constructed as the **Orsay railway station** for the Exposition Universelle of 1900. Designed by architect Victor Laloux, this masterpiece of Art Nouveau engineering was intended to serve as the terminus for the Paris-Orléans railway line. Its grandiose facade, blending stone and metal, was meant to impress foreign dignitaries arriving in the capital. However, with the rise of suburban rail networks, the station became obsolete by the mid-20th century, facing potential demolition until a visionary decision saved it.

The transformation from a transport hub to a cultural sanctuary was initiated by President **Valéry Giscard d'Estaing**, who recognized the building's architectural potential and the need for a museum dedicated to the art of 1848 to 1914. This period had been neglected by the Louvre and the Musée de l'Orangerie, leaving a gap in Paris's cultural landscape. The conversion project, led by architects Renaud Bardon, Pierre Colboc, and Jean-Paul Philippon, along with interior designer Gae Aulenti, was a monumental task that preserved the station's clock and vaulted ceilings while creating modern gallery spaces.

Opening its doors on **December 9, 1986**, the museum instantly became a global icon. It housed the world's largest collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist masterpieces, bringing together works that had previously been scattered across various state collections. The decision to place these luminous paintings within the industrial yet elegant shell of the former station created a unique dialogue between the art of the 19th century and the architecture of the Belle Époque, celebrating the era's spirit of innovation and beauty.

Today, the museum stands not just as a repository of art but as a testament to urban preservation. It is legally attached to the **Musée de l'Orangerie** since 2010, forming a single public establishment that manages two of Paris's most important art institutions. This union allows for a cohesive narrative of Impressionism, from the urban scenes at Orsay to the immersive Water Lilies at the Orangerie, ensuring that the legacy of these artists remains vibrant and accessible to millions of visitors annually.

THE EXPERIENCE

Stepping into the Musée d'Orsay is like entering a cathedral of light, where the **grand clock** dominates the central hall, its face illuminated by the natural light filtering through the glass roof above. The atmosphere is one of reverent awe, as the vast, vaulted spaces—once filled with the noise of trains and travelers—now echo with the quiet contemplation of art lovers. The architecture itself becomes part of the exhibition, framing the masterpieces with a sense of grandeur that enhances their emotional impact.

As you ascend the levels, the experience shifts from the structured realism of the ground floor to the vibrant chaos of Impressionism upstairs. The **natural light** plays a crucial role here, particularly in the galleries overlooking the Seine, where the changing hues of the day reflect off the canvases of Monet and Renoir. It is a sensory journey that connects the viewer not only to the artists but to the very moment in history when art broke free from tradition to capture the fleeting essence of life.



PREPARING FOR YOUR VISIT

Practical Information

ADDRESS

7th arrondissement · Metro: Solférino (Line 12) or RER C Musée d'Orsay.

OPENING HOURS

Closed on Mondays. Open late on Thursdays (night session). Check for exceptional closure dates.

PRICES

Free for under 18s and EU residents under 26. {promo}.

VISIT DURATION

Allow 2 to 3 hours to see the essential impressionist works. A full day is necessary for a complete immersion in all collections.

PHOTOS

Photography is allowed without flash or tripod for private use. Selfies are prohibited in front of artworks. Check restrictions during temporary exhibitions.

AUDIENCE

Ideal for art lovers and families. The auditorium offers shows for young audiences. Accessible to people with reduced mobility via elevators.

LOCALISATION

Où se trouve the Musée d'Orsay ?



📍 Esplanade Valéry Giscard d'Estaing — 75007 Paris

🌐 48°51.598′ N, 2°19.594′ E



ORGANIZATION

Navigating the Floors

Level 0 (Ground Floor)

This level focuses on the art of 1848 to 1870, featuring Realism and early Impressionism. You will find works by Courbet, such as 'The Studio of the Painter,' and Manet's controversial 'Olympia.' The galleries also include decorative arts and photography, providing context for the artistic revolution of the mid-19th century.

Level 2

The heart of Impressionism, this floor houses the most famous works of Monet, Renoir, and Degas. The long galleries overlook the Seine, allowing natural light to enhance the vibrant colors of paintings like 'Bal du moulin de la Galette.' It is the most crowded level, so visit early or late to enjoy the masterpieces in peace.

Level 5 (Terrace)

This upper level features Post-Impressionist works by Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Cézanne. The **panoramic view** from the bay windows offers a breathtaking perspective of the Seine and the Île aux Cygnes. It is a quieter area, perfect for reflecting on the evolution of art before leaving the museum.

ACCESSIBILITY

♿ **Accessibility for people with reduced mobility**

Full accessibility for people with reduced mobility, including elevators and reserved parking spaces

👨‍👩‍👧 **Families**

Shows for young audiences in the auditorium; strollers allowed.

🎧 **Audio guide**

French, English, Spanish



Must-sees

SELECTION

Masterpieces You Must See

01 PIERRE-AUGUSTE RENOIR Room 42

Bal du moulin de la Galette

This large canvas captures a lively Sunday afternoon dance at a popular windmill in Montmartre. Renoir uses **dappled light** to create a sense of movement and joy, depicting friends and models in a spontaneous moment. It is considered one of the greatest Impressionist masterpieces.

> 💡 Renoir painted this work in 1876, and it was one of the few Impressionist works accepted by the official Salon at the time, showcasing his skill in blending tradition with innovation.

02 ÉDOUARD MANET Room 15

Olympia

A provocative work that scandalized critics in 1865, this painting depicts a nude woman with a direct, challenging gaze. Manet breaks with academic tradition by using **flat colors** and ignoring perspective, focusing on the psychological intensity of the subject.

> 💡 The model, Victorine Meurent, also posed for Manet's 'Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe,' and her confident expression was seen as a challenge to the male gaze of the time.

03 CLAUDE MONET Room 43

The Cathedral of Rouen Series

Monet painted the facade of the Rouen Cathedral at different times of day and in varying weather conditions. These five paintings demonstrate his obsession with **light and atmosphere**, showing how the same subject can appear entirely different depending on the light.

> 💡 Monet set up his easels in a hotel room opposite the cathedral, painting rapidly to capture the fleeting effects of light, often working on multiple canvases simultaneously.

04 EDGAR DEGAS Room 46

The Little Dancer of Fourteen Years

This mixed-media sculpture combines wax with real hair, a tutu, and shoes, creating a startlingly realistic effect. Degas captures the **raw energy** of a young ballet dancer, contrasting the elegance of dance with the harsh reality of the dancer's life.

> 💡 When first exhibited, the use of real materials caused a scandal, as critics were unaccustomed to seeing such lifelike details in sculpture.

05 GUSTAVE COURBET Room 12

The Origin of the World

A controversial and explicit painting of a female nude torso, this work is a masterpiece of **realism**. Courbet's detailed depiction challenges the idealized nudes of academic art, focusing on the physical reality of the human body.

> 💡 The painting was acquired by the French state in 1995 after being held in private collections for over a century, sparking debate about its public display.

06 PAUL CÉZANNE Room 50

Card Players

This series of paintings depicts Provençal peasants playing cards, with a focus on **geometric forms** and solid composition. Cézanne's work bridges Impressionism and Cubism, emphasizing structure over fleeting light.

> 💡 Cézanne painted five versions of this scene, each refining the composition and simplifying the forms to achieve a sense of timeless stability.

07 GUSTAVE COURBET Room 13

A Burial at Ornans

This monumental painting depicts a funeral in Courbet's hometown, featuring real people from his community. It is a bold statement of **realism**, rejecting historical or mythological subjects in favor of contemporary life.

> 💡 The painting was initially rejected by the Salon for its size and subject matter, as such large canvases were traditionally reserved for historical events.

08 GUSTAVE COURBET Room 14

The Studio of the Painter

Also known as 'The Allegory of a Real Painting,' this work features Courbet surrounded by friends, models, and symbols of his life. It is a complex composition that explores the **role of the artist** in society and the nature of art itself.

> 💡 The painting includes figures from various social classes, reflecting Courbet's belief that art should represent all aspects of life, not just the elite.

TIPS

Tips for a Perfect Visit

TIMING

Visit on Thursday evenings until 9:45 PM for a magical atmosphere with fewer crowds and beautiful natural light fading into evening.

BILLET

Book tickets online in advance and use Gate C on the quay for skip-the-line access, which is much faster than the main entrance.

PARCOURS

Follow the chronological route: start on the ground floor for Realism, then move up to Impressionism on the second floor, and end with Post-Impressionism on the fifth floor.

PHOTO

Take photos from the bay windows on the second floor for stunning views of the Seine and Île aux Cygnes, but avoid flash and tripods near artworks.

PAUSE

Enjoy a coffee break on the Esplanade Valéry Giscard d'Estaing after your visit to digest the art and enjoy the view of the river.

ENFANTS

Check the auditorium schedule for family-friendly shows and activities designed for children, making the visit engaging for young audiences.

AUDIOGUIDE

The audioguide is available in English and provides valuable insights into the key works, especially for those new to Impressionism.

CONFORT

Wear comfortable shoes as the museum is large, and consider visiting on a Wednesday or Friday to avoid the crowds that flock there on Tuesdays when the Louvre is closed.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Do I need to book tickets for the Musée d'Orsay?

Yes, online booking is strongly recommended, especially during peak season and on weekends. It allows you to avoid long queues at the ticket windows. Additionally, it grants access to the skip-the-line entry via Gate C.

Does the ticket include temporary exhibitions?

Yes, the single price gives access to both the permanent collections AND temporary exhibitions. You do not need to buy a separate ticket for the exhibitions. This is an economic and practical advantage for a complete vis

What is the difference between Entrance A and Entrance C?

Entrance A is the standard access on the Esplanade, often busy. Entrance C, located on the quay, is dedicated to skip-the-line tickets purchased online. It allows for quick and direct access, without waiting at the ticke

Is it possible to visit the Musée de l'Orangerie with the same ticket?

The Musée de l'Orangerie has been legally linked to the Musée d'Orsay since 2010, but tickets are generally separate. Check if combined tickets are available during your booking. Do not count on automatic access.

What is the best time to visit the Musée d'Orsay?

Prefer morning at opening (9:30 am) or Thursday evening (late night). Avoid Tuesday (peak attendance because the Louvre is closed) and weekends. Wednesdays and Friday afternoons are often quieter.

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

The Clock's Secret

The giant clock in the central hall is a **functional masterpiece** from the original station. It still tells the time and is illuminated at night, creating a stunning visual effect that draws visitors' eyes upward.

Impressionist Density

The museum holds the **largest collection** of Impressionist paintings in the world, with nearly 1,100 canvases. This density allows visitors to see the evolution of the movement in a single visit.

Laloux's Vision

Architect Victor Laloux designed the station to be both functional and beautiful, combining **metal and stone** in a way that was revolutionary for its time. The building is now a classified historical monument.

The Orangerie Link

Since 2010, the Musée de l'Orangerie has been legally attached to the Musée d'Orsay, forming a single institution. This allows for a **unified narrative** of Impressionism across both sites.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

The area surrounding the Musée d'Orsay is rich with cultural and leisure opportunities. Just across the Seine, you can visit the **Musée de l'Orangerie** to see Monet's Water Lilies, a perfect complement to your visit. For a romantic stroll, walk along the **Esplanade Valéry Giscard d'Estaing**, which offers stunning views of the river and the Eiffel Tower in the distance. If you are hungry, the **Café de l'Orangerie** provides a gastronomic break with a view of the lily ponds. Alternatively, explore the chic **Rue de Varenne**, known for its antique dealers and art galleries, before heading to the **Jardin des Tuileries** for a relaxing green promenade towards the Louvre.



Visiting the Musée d'Orsay is more than viewing art; it is stepping into a living memory of Paris. Whether you are drawn by the bold strokes of Manet or the serene landscapes of Monet, the museum offers a **timeless escape** from the modern world. It is a place where history breathes, and every glance at a masterpiece feels like a conversation with the past, leaving you with a profound sense of beauty and inspiration.