

Ooh La! La! Arts of France

Tour Description

From a Stone Age goddess to an aristocratic Grand Salon to Impressionist favorites, explore how French painting, decorative arts, and sculpture have captivated the world. See stunning examples of Rococo, Neoclassical, Romantic, and Modern works as you discover their connections with major events and people of European history.

Tour Objective This tour shows the wide variety of arts produced in France through the ages. Learn about French interest in and mastery of various art forms, what French art can tell us about the daily life and history of its people, and how the art has influenced and been influenced by other cultures.

Themes

Arts of France: A Chronological Approach This tour uses compare and contrast while looking at French art chronologically.

The Madonna Enthroned in Majesty with the Christ Child (12th c.) 66.24, *Madonna and Child* (14th c.) 63.59, and *Virgin and Child* (14th c.), 45.36 – examine differences in figural styles.

Clouet, *Princess Charlotte of France*, 16th century – daughter of Francois I/Francis I; he introduced the Renaissance to France from Italy and befriended Leonardo da Vinci.

Nicolas Poussin, *Death of Germanicus*, 17th century – French Baroque period.

Dutch landscapes and genre scenes toward the end of the 17th century, contrasted with Nicolas de Largillière, *Portrait of Catherine Coustard* – compare and contrast the Dutch emphasis on the merchant class with the French emphasis on the grandeur of royalty; for example, the era of Louis XIV and Versailles.

Grand Salon, 18th century, where someone like Catherine Coustard could have lived. See rococo examples of porcelain in the adjacent cases.

Look at many developments during the 19th and 20th centuries:
Gérôme, *The Carpet Merchant* – Academic art
Monet, Renoir, Pissarro – Impressionism
Braque, *Viaduct à l'Estaque* – Cubism
Matisse, *Three Bathers*, or Derain, *St Paul's cathedral seen from the Thames* – Fauvism
Tanguy, *Through Birds*, etc. – Surrealism

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The following themes do not follow the tour description closely, but could be used depending on the group's interests.

***Ancien Régime:
People and
Places of 18th-
century France***

The term *Ancien Régime* means “old” or “former rule” and covers roughly 15th-18th century France. This time period marks the beginning of the Valois monarchy in the Middle Ages and reaches to the Bourbon monarchy and its demise during the French Revolution of 1789. Although this is a broad time context, most of the objects on this tour are from the 18th century.

Chinese Fair by François Boucher, 1750

This tapestry speaks to the French people's love of all things Chinese, called *chinoiserie*, during the reign of Louis XV; aristocratic taste.

Portrait of Catherine Coustard by Largillière, c.1699

Daughter-in-law of an aristocrat working in service of King Louis XIV; reveals status, dress, etc.

St. John the Baptist by Boucher, 1755

Painting commissioned by mistress of Louis XV, Mme de Pompadour, in the hope of appearing pious to the court.

Attributes of the Arts by Chardin, 1766

Chardin was the official painter in Louis XV's court; lived in the Louvre palace.

Grand Salon, 1733-37

Hotel or residence typical of an aristocrat in the reign of Louis XV. Talk about what a soirée might have been like, dress, entertainment, etc.

Vigée-LeBrun, *Portrait of Comtesse Bucquoi*, 1793

Official portrait painter and close friend of Marie Antoinette, had to flee to Austria when the Revolution broke out.

Portrait Bust of Louis XV, 1745-50 (just outside Grand Salon)

Talk about his reign, and a fun connection to make—his face is a very strong resemblance to the face of *St. John the Baptist* seen earlier, commissioned by Louis XV's mistress Mme de Pompadour!

Pajou, *Psyche Abandoned*, c.1800

The earlier plaster model created a scandal during the reign of Louis XVI (Salon of 1785) but a later marble version was acclaimed and bronze reductions were made.

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**Wine Tour
through French
Art**

This tour encompasses how wine has inspired artists to create objects to store and drink wine, and how wine is enjoyed in celebrations and social events. May also include explanations on the creation of myths surrounding wine gods and goddesses.

Paul de Lamerie, *Wine Cistern*, 1719-20

Girodet, *Mlle Lange as Danae*, 1799

Her first husband was a wealthy winegrower; see references to vines/wine in the painting.

Grand Salon, 1733-37

Place where wine might have been used for entertainment.

Corot, *Silenus*, 1838

Drunken Silenus, teacher of Dionysis, from *Roman Eclogues*.

Clésinger, *Bachante and Satyr*, 1869

More wine mythology and licentious behavior!

Baccarat Glassworks, *Punch Bowl*, c.1867

Vessel to hold wine with mythological imagery.

Barye, *Theseus Slaying Centaur*, c.1850, cast c.1891

What can happen when too much wine is consumed at a wedding!

de Fresnaye, *Married Life*, 1912

A couple with each in their own way enjoying food and wine.

**Women of
French Art**

This tour explores what the artists wanted us to know about these women and what the women wanted us to know about *them*. The chronological sequence shows the development of French art.

Neolithic female figure

Gothic statue of Madonna and Child

Charlotte of France by Clouet

Madame Aubry by Nicolas de Largillière

Springtime of Life by Corot

Daughter and her Nanny by Berthe Morissot

Nude on a Couch by Caillebotte

Le Petit Déjeuner by Léger