



GALLERY OF COACHES

KING'S GREAT STABLES



CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES



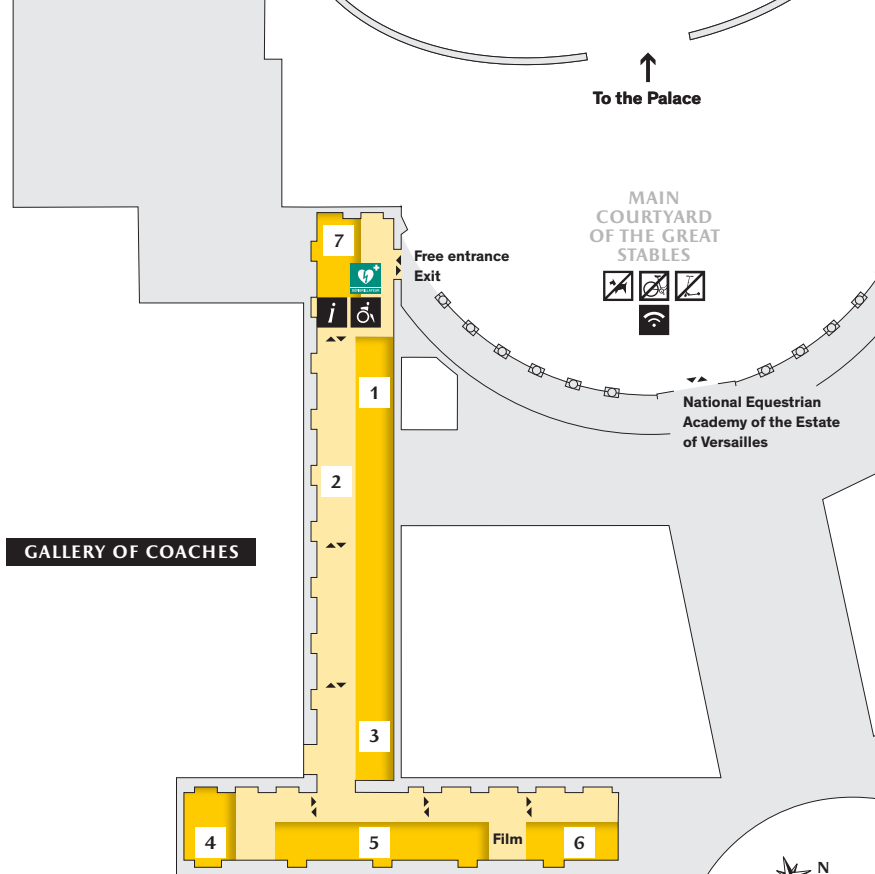
The Versailles coach collection is one of Europe's largest and was put together by King Louis-Philippe in 1831 when he transformed the royal palace into a museum dedicated "to all the Glories of France." Sedan chairs and sleds joined the collections in 1851 when the first Trianon Coach museum opened its doors to the public.

Coaches were designed to make an impression on minds and were total works of art. With their ostentatious luxury and profuse ornamentation, they were crafted by the Court's finest artists: architects, joiners, sculptors, painters, bronze smelters, gilders, upholsterers, embroiderers...

Over and beyond its artistic quality, the collection is also a kind of "Car Show of the 18th and 19th centuries", displaying the finest prototypes and cutting-edge advances in French coach building in terms of elegance, comfort and techniques.

Each coach also recounts a page in the History of France through a dynastic or political event: a christening, wedding, coronation or funeral. The Versailles coaches provide a living testimony to life at Court and to the grandeur of the *Ancien Régime*, the Empire and the Bourbon Restoration.

*Perspective view
of the town, stables,
palace and gardens of
Versailles at the end
of the reign of Louis XIV
(detail), circa 1710-1715,
anonymous*



GALLERY OF COACHES

- 1. The state coaches for the wedding of Napoleon I
- 2. The Sedan chairs and children's coaches
- 3. The state coach for the christening of the Duke of Bordeaux
- 4. The Court sleds

- 5. The coronation coach of Charles X
- 6. The funeral hearse of Louis XVIII
- 7. The presidential coaches

- Information
- Access to the whole Gallery
- Free WiFi
- Defibrillator
- Dogs, bicycles and push scooters are not allowed in the Gallery of Coaches.

To highlight your visit, discover the free **games booklet** for ages 6-12 years, available at the entrance to the Gallery and on chateauversailles.fr



Download the free **audioguide** to the visit route of the Gallery of Coaches from onelink.to/chateau



With the free "Château de Versailles" app*, explore the Gallery of Coaches.

Use the interactive map to find your way around the Estate.

Find practical information, opening hours and suggestions for visits. To get the most out of your visit, the app provides you with information in real time.

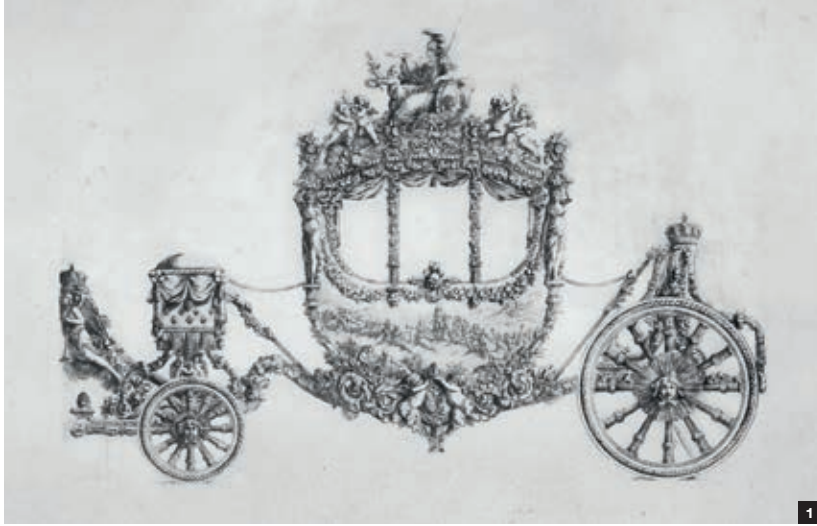
The app also includes a tour of the Palace of Versailles, the gardens, the Admirable Trees of the Estate of Versailles and the Estate of Trianon.

* available for iOS and Android, in French, English and Spanish.

WITH THE PATRONAGE OF



THE ROYAL STABLES

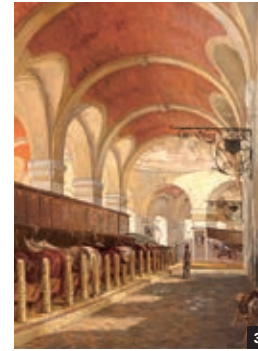


Most European royal families would have happily settled for such buildings as their palace, but for the King of France, these were just his stables. Contemporaries of Louis XIV were amazed by the scale and majesty of the stables at Versailles. Their outstanding location, facing the Palace, is proof in itself of the importance of horses in the display of power under the *Ancien Régime*.

The Great and Small Stables

The names come not from their size, but from their use. To the north, the Great Stables were under the authority of the Grand Equerry of France, referred to as *Monsieur le Grand*, and housed the perfectly trained steeds for hunting and warfare. To the south, the Small Stables were headed by the First Equerry, referred to as

1. Coach for the coronation of Louis XVI in Reims, 2 June 1775, by Jean-Louis Prieur le Jeune (1759-1795); engraving



2. Cross-section of the King's Great Stables at Versailles in 1695 (detail), by agency of Jules Hardouin-Mansart (1646-1708)

3. The double-row stalls in the Small Stables at Versailles (detail), by Johann Georg Rosenberg (1739-1808)

Monsieur le Premier, and were home to the horses for ordinary uses and coach horses. In principle, the Grand Equerry commanded all the stables and stud farms, although the First Equerry always had difficulty accepting this subordination. Between these two eminent figures there was a never-ending rivalry.

The construction

The Royal Stables of Versailles were the biggest royal construction project ever undertaken to house horses. The work on the two buildings started in 1679 to prepare for the installation of the Court and government in Versailles. Placed under the supervision of Jules Hardouin-Mansart, the undertaking was carried out by an army of labourers in a record time of just three years, from 1679 to 1682.

The buildings

The buildings are laid out in an original horse-shoe shape, organised around five courtyards. The side wings were given over to the personnel, while the central part was assigned to the horses. In the centre of each set of buildings lays the arena, which was rectangular at the Great Stables and round at the Small Stables.

A wide institution

The stables were one of the most important departments of the *Maison du Roi*. They were a constant hive of activity with almost one thousand men working there: squires, coachmen, masters of hounds, postilions, footmen, lads, stablemen, blacksmiths, chaplains, musicians, horse surgeons, the Pages' School... It was a world unto itself.

The King's horses

The galleries housed hundreds of horses, ordered by breed and by coat colour. Spanish, Arabian and Persian



horses were used for parades and carrousel, English horses for hunting, while the coach horses came from Poland, Denmark or Prussia. The stables of Versailles amazed visitors by the unusual height of their vaults, the thickness of the walls and their stone paving. The horses were stabled in a single row at the Great Stables and in a double row at the Small Stables, separated only by swinging bails that allowed a magnificent, unobstructed view and the well-being of the horses themselves.

The golden age of French equestrianism

The art of French dressage reached perfection in the arena of the Great Stables. From 1680 to 1830, a new form of thinking and new techniques emerged in equestrianism, aiming to restore the natural attitudes of the mounts and achieve perfect harmony between rider and horse. The squire's elegance from the School of Versailles was renowned throughout Europe and contributed to the prestige of the kingdom.

1. Arrival of three coaches in front of the railings of the Ambassadors' Staircase (detail), 1725, by Louis Surugue (1686-1762); engraving

2 and 3. The wedding procession of Napoleon I and Marie-Louise crossing the Tuileries Garden on 2 April 1810 (details), by Étienne-Barthélemy Garnier (1759-1849)

THE STATE COACHES FOR THE WEDDING OF NAPOLEON I



On 2 April 1810, less than one month after his divorce from Empress Josephine who was unable to bear him an heir, Napoleon I married Archduchess Marie-Louise of Austria. The event was marked by three days of stunning celebrations that owed much of their grandeur to the magnificent processions.

Forty coaches drove through the Étoile Gate and under the as yet unfinished Arc de Triomphe, before proceeding down the Champs-Élysées up to the Tuileries Garden, acclaimed by jubilant crowds. The power of the Emperor was displayed on this important day by the splendour of his coaches and their retinues.

The Imperial Guard opened the way, followed by the thirty-four coaches of the Court (including *La Cornaline* and *L'Améthyste* shown in the gallery). Then came the coach of the Empress, which was unoccupied during the procession in line with royal tradition, then that of the Emperor himself, drawn by eight horses and surrounded by the Marshals of the Empire and the Grand Equerries on magnificent steeds. Finally,



1. *The wedding procession of Napoleon I and Marie-Louise crossing the Tuilleries Garden on 2 April 1810* (detail), by Étienne-Barthélémy Garnier (1759-1849)

the coaches of the Grand Almoner, of the maids of honour and the one of the Imperial family, which were even richer and more elegant in style, brought up the end of the procession (five of them are on display in the gallery).

The grandeur of this procession – forty ceremonial coaches and over two hundred and forty horses – exceeded even that of the coronation in 1804 and, most importantly, overshadowed the magnificence of former royal processions: in similar circumstances, the Kings of the Bourbon dynasty only used some thirty coaches.



2. *View of the Palace of Versailles and the Chapel Courtyard* (detail), circa 1725, by Jacques Rigaud (1681-1754)

3. *View of the Orangery and Palace of Versailles from the Lake of the Swiss Guard* (detail), circa 1740, by Jacques-André Portail (1695-1759)

THE SEDAN CHAIRS

Although the sedan chair has existed since ancient times, it was at the end of the 16th century that it made its reappearance in Europe. Sedan chairs could be privately owned or hired and were the most widely used form of transport for short trips.

In large cities congested with coaches, the chair offered an attractive alternative: it was less costly, more manoeuvrable and every bit as quick in narrow, poorly-paved streets. It was also more convenient: carried as it was by two bearers with leather breast collars, there was no need to prepare or harness horses and once the journey was over, it could easily be stored against a wall, in a hallway or on a landing.

In the manner of coaches, sedan chairs were built by saddler-coachbuilders and displayed the initials and coats of arms of their owners. Sedan chairs were available for hire in Paris as early as 1617, with routes and prices being set in advance.

In Versailles too, there were private and public sedan chairs. The *Chaises Bleues* service named after the colour of the livery of the King's bearers, proposed chair trips for six sols. The chairs were used not only to cross the courtyards and gardens, but also inside the Palace. Everyone was allowed into the Palace in a *Chaise Bleue* as far as the foot of the King's Staircase. They were strictly prohibited, however, in the Marble Courtyard, and only the chairs of the royal family were allowed upstairs.

THE CHILDREN'S COACHES

In Ancient Rome, on the occasion of the Saturnalia festival, the children of wealthy families would be given miniature chariots drawn by a sheep. In the modern era, miniature vehicles were to remain a big favourite: every young prince had his miniature coach.



At the age of 18 months, Louis XIII received several such coaches, including one carrying four dolls and an automaton toy coach

“driven by a spring”. Later, the young Louis XIV would enjoy himself hunting ducks by the Tuileries Canal in a small chariot drawn by two barbet dogs. Later still, the sons of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette were each to receive a small town coach and an open carriage in the very latest fashion, both on display in the gallery.

From their youngest age, the future sovereigns could therefore parade in style. The small coaches used for walks were pulled along by an adult or hitched up to animals, such as sheep or goats, while one of the children from the prince's retinue played the footman, standing on the rear platform.

These children's vehicles crafted out of the most precious materials by the greatest coachbuilders were not mere toys. They were genuine reduced-scale versions of the latest models featuring all their technical innovations.

1. *The King of Rome on an excursion in his coach on the terrace of the Tuileries* (detail)

2. *View of the ceiling lining of the coach for the christening of the Duke of Bordeaux*

3. *Henri-Charles-Ferdinand d'Artois, Duke of Bordeaux, and his sister Louise-Marie-Thérèse d'Artois* (detail), 1821, by Louis Hersent (1777-1860)

THE STATE COACH FOR THE CHRISTENING OF THE DUKE OF BORDEAUX

In 1820, the Duke of Berry, son of the future Charles X and the only hope of providing the Bourbon dynasty with an heir, was assassinated, shaking royalist France to its foundations. The posthumous birth of his son the Duke of Bordeaux was therefore cause for an immense celebration. On 1 May 1821, Louis XVIII surrounded the child's christening with extraordinary pomp and circumstance.

Twenty-seven coaches left the courtyard of the Tuileries and proceeded along the Louvre quaysides, past the festooned facades, and then across the Pont-Neuf towards Notre-Dame. In the middle of the procession, the luxurious coach carried the child lying on his governess' knees, alongside his elder sister Mademoiselle d'Artois. In the early afternoon, the procession arrived in front of the cathedral, decorated in breath-taking style for the occasion.

While the aim was to celebrate the “miracle child” who carried all the hopes of the French Bourbons, the particular splendour of this procession was also intended to eclipse memories of another grand christening some ten years earlier, that of the King of Rome, son of Napoleon I.

This was the most luxurious state coach that had ever existed until that time, adorned with an elbowline of engraved bronze and with gilding of admirable finesse. On the inside, the head of the coach's lining was embroidered with silk, gold and sequins by the ladies of the *Légion d'honneur*. Each of the four corners bears a large eagle, a reminder of its use under the reign of Napoleon III on the christening of the Imperial Prince in 1856.



Get in the car!

Get on board for a 360° online visit of the coach interiors: the coach for the christening of the Duke of Bordeaux, the coronation coach of Charles X and *La Brillante* used for the wedding of Napoleon I.

THE COURT SLEDS



When the walks through the gardens of Versailles were covered in snow and the Grand Canal was frozen over, the King and his Court would indulge in the pleasures of sled races. This fashion imported from the Nordic countries held sway through three successive reigns, from Louis XIV to Louis XVI.

These fragile yet luxurious vehicles were drawn by a horse with studded horse shoes and embroidered harnesses with silver bells that would jingle prettily in the silence of the snowy gardens. They were driven by the lords of the Court wearing fur hats and frock coats, settled on the seat at the rear of the sled and holding the reins. The ladies in Polish-style casaquin jackets would let themselves be driven around or would sometimes take



1, 2 and 3. Water
(details), circa 1640-1641,
by Claude Deruet
(1588-1660)

**4. A lady being driven
in a sled on the snow,**
1729, attributed to
Charles-Antoine Coypel
(1694-1752)



the reins themselves, a unique privilege in Europe. Although sled races were all the rage towards the end of the reign of Louis XIV, enthusiasm for them was even greater under Louis XV: the King was an impressive driver and would race along at high speed in his sled. Setting out from the Great Terrace, the joyful host would glide down the walks through the garden and around the Grand Canal to the Menagerie, before returning via Trianon and then galloping across the Great Lawn and back up to the Palace.

It was Marie-Antoinette who then brought sled parties back into fashion, in memory of those she enjoyed in her youth in Vienna. The Queen had the old sleds of the Court brought out from the stables. Some of them are displayed here. With their fantastic creatures and rare or mythical animals, the sleds formed a weird and wonderful bestiary. These fancy vehicles were managed by the *Menus-Plaisirs*, the institution in charge of festivities and theatre sets.

THE CORONATION COACH OF CHARLES X

On 29 May 1825, Charles X was crowned in Notre-Dame Cathedral in Reims. For this ceremony which was the cornerstone of the monarchy of divine right, he ordered an extraordinarily sumptuous coach to be built. After the Revolution and the Empire, the new King was seeking a return to the grandeur of the *Ancien Régime*.

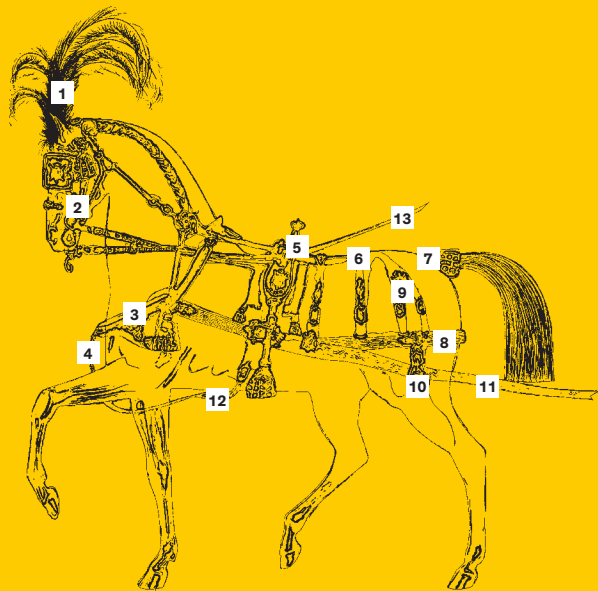
No sooner had the construction of this coach for Louis XVIII begun than it was abandoned when the King gave up on the idea of a coronation for political reasons. As soon as Charles X came to the throne, the Marquis of Vernon, the equerry in charge of the stables, had the work started again. It was completed in the space of less than six months, supervised by master coachbuilder Daldringen.

For the journey to Reims, the coach was partly dismantled and carefully wrapped in canvas sheeting to protect it and shield it from the eyes of onlookers along the way. It was reassembled for the King's entry into town. This veritable travelling throne was used again the next day for the procession to the cathedral where the coronation was to be celebrated. It was used again on 6 June 1825 for the entrance of Charles X into Paris, and one last time in 1856 for the christening of the Imperial Prince, son of Napoleon III: on that occasion, its decoration was modified, with the royal insignia being replaced by imperial emblems.

This coach was immediately acknowledged to be the masterpiece of French coachbuilding for its ingenious mechanics, the precision of its assembly and its ornaments featuring all the different decorative arts. It was "the finest of all the coronation coaches ever built", according to the illustrious professor and coach designer Duchesne, and is the only one still conserved today in France.



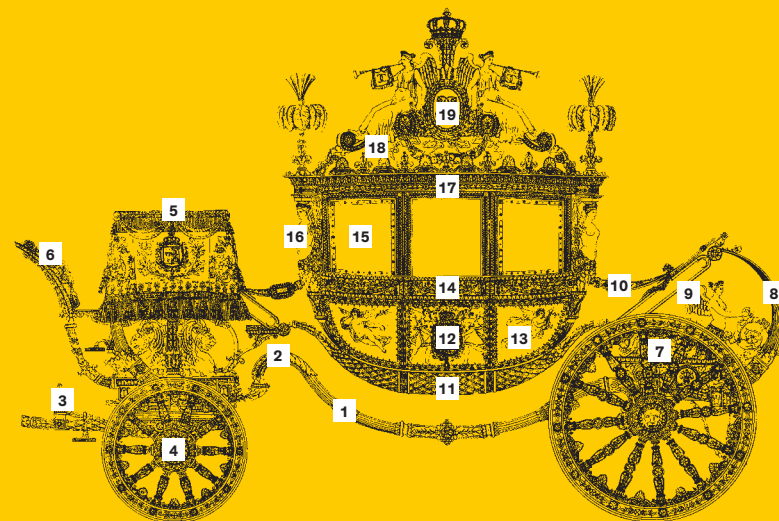
1, 2 and 3. *Entry of Charles X to Paris on his return from his coronation in Reims, 6 June 1825* (details), by Louis-François Lejeune (1775-1848)



THE HORSE HARNESS

Harness

1. Plume
2. Bridle comprising:
headpiece, browband,
clip, overcheck, blinkers,
cheek piece, noseband,
throat lash and bit
3. Breast collar
4. False martingale
5. Saddle with the terrets
through which
the driving lines pass
6. Back strap
7. Crupper
8. Breeching (for wheel
horses)
9. Loin straps
10. Trace holder
11. Traces
12. Belly band
13. Driving lines held
by the coachman;
reins by the postilion



THE COACH

Undercarriage

1. Perch connecting
the front and rear axles
2. Crane's neck
3. Fore carriage
for attaching
the draught-beam
4. Decorative ring
on the hub
5. Box seat for
the coachman
6. Coachman's
footboard
7. Platform
for the footman

Suspension

8. C-spring
9. Leather brace
10. Anti-roll belt

Body

11. Side sill
containing
the footboard
12. Door panel
13. Quarter panel
14. Elbowline
15. Opera window
or quarter panel
16. Pillar
(corner upright)

Top

17. Sculpted cornice
18. Edging rail
19. Head (roof)
Ceiling lining

THE FUNERAL HEARSE OF LOUIS XVIII

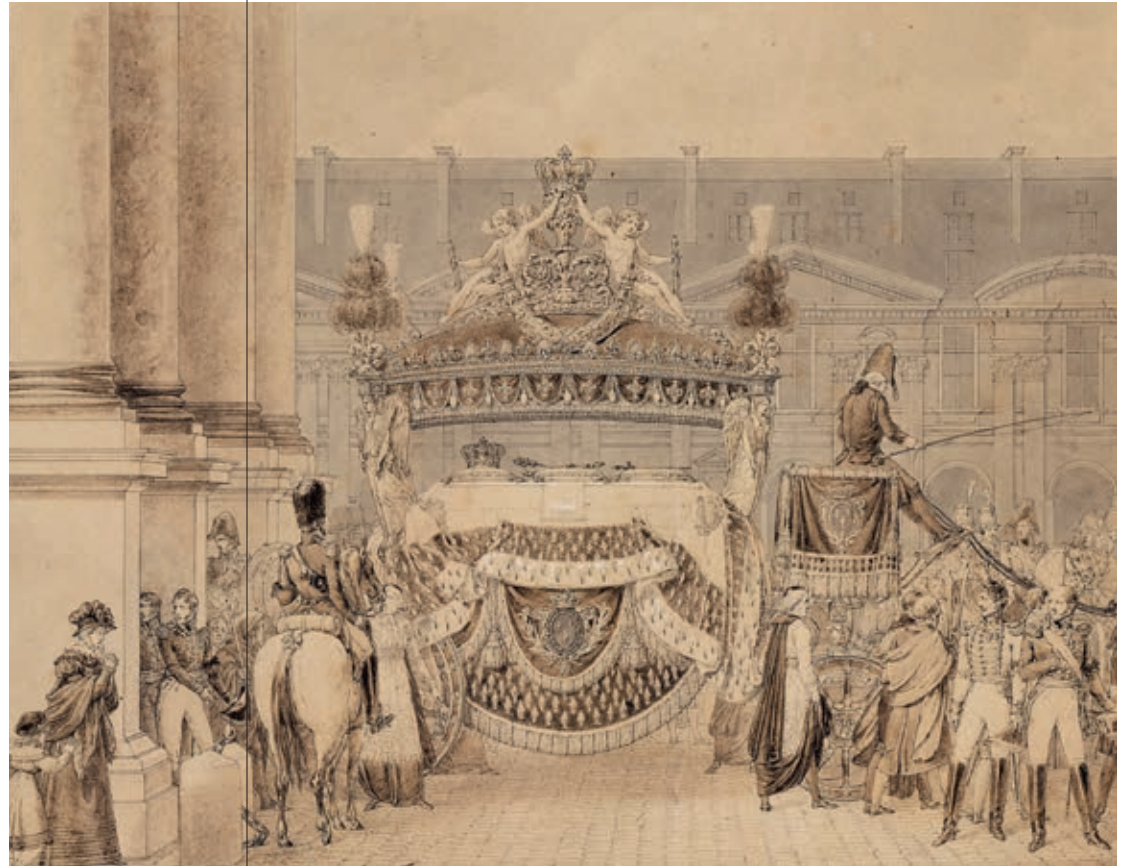
On 16 September 1824, after reigning for ten years, Louis XVIII passed away. The Chambers voted to grant an exceptional budget for a grandiose funeral intended to enhance the prestige of a much-contested dynasty. 23 September saw the grandest funeral procession of any French monarch.

The body was taken from the Tuileries Palace shortly before eleven o'clock. The hearse was waiting in the courtyard. The bodyguards placed the coffin in it, on the royal cloak of purple velvet decorated with *fleur de lys*, and draped with an ermine-edged black velvet shroud set with silver moire fabric, bearing the royal coat of arms in the corners. The departure was announced by a 101-cannon salute.

The hearse proceeded at walking pace towards the Abbey of Saint-Denis, the necropolis of the Kings of France since the Middle Ages. It was drawn by eight horses caparisoned in black velvet embroidered with silver tears and fringed with tassels, creating, according to witnesses, "an impression of majesty and sadness".

The decoration is in sculpted wood, gilded with white gold: angels and caryatids bear palm fronds symbolising the hope of resurrection, the crown of France is held up by a natural bouquet of lilies, and death is symbolised by cherubs overturning a torch.

This is the only royal funeral hearse still in existence in France. Until it was rediscovered, this kind of coach was known only through written descriptions or a few rare portrayals. As the successors of Louis XVIII were to die in exile, his was the last funeral of a King of France.



Funeral hearse of Louis XVIII
(detail), by Charles Abraham
Chasselat (1782-1843)

THE PRESIDENTIAL COACHES

In 1870, after the fall of the Second Empire and the proclamation of the Third Republic, the prestigious stables of Napoleon III were disbanded and the coaches stored away or sold off at an auction. These democratic days did not welcome displays of wealth.



However, the requirements of official representation, soon forced the Presidency of the Republic to acquire new vehicles suited to these various circumstances: receiving ambassadors, going on local tours, world's fairs and official visits by foreign sovereigns. The State therefore placed orders with such prestigious Parisian coachbuilders such as Ehrler, who had previously worked for Napoleon III, Mühlbacher and Rothschild & Fils.

A new kind of coachbuilding emerged, with vehicles that were simpler and even austere in their outward appearance, but which featured a host of luxurious details: sleek lines, dumb irons carved in the shape of serpents, ivory window handles, padded interior linings, interior lighting and suspensions with eight springs offering unrivalled comfort.

As the century drew to a close, Parisian coachbuilding reached its peak, dominating the rest of Europe by the technical perfection and elegance of its output, but it was the end of an era. After the Great War, around 1920, a page was turned as the automobile took the upper hand once and for all.

1. President Poincaré and George V, King of England, in the Grand Landau of the Presidency of the Republic in April 1914 (detail)

The Stables seen from the Palace of Versailles (detail), by Jean-Baptiste Martin l'Ancien (1659-1735)



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Interior Security Code, Articles L.251-1 and seq.



Pickpockets may be operating and we therefore
ask all visitors to remain vigilant.



The use of **extendible monopods** for smartphones
is strictly prohibited inside the Museum rooms.



**This collection of monuments is listed as
UNESCO World Heritage.**

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