

VERSAILLES CELEBRATES 150 YEARS OF THE REPUBLIC THE SEATS OF POWER UNVEILED



Versailles, 30 January 2025
Press Release

Proclaimed in 1870, the Third Republic was definitively established in France with the adoption of the Wallon Amendment in Versailles, followed by the constitutional laws of 1875, which created the two chambers and established the election of the President of the Republic. On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of this founding event, the Palace of Versailles is highlighting its republican heritage and recalling the highly symbolic yet often overlooked role that the former royal residence has played in the life of French democracy and the exercise of power.

A DEDICATED PROGRAM

**EXCEPTIONAL OPENINGS TO THE PUBLIC:
THE HALL OF CONGRESS, THE CONGRESS' PRESIDENT'S APARTMENT,
AND TRIANON-SOUS-BOIS**

The Hall of Congress, built in just six months in 1875, is larger than the chambers of both the National Assembly and the Senate in Paris. Its astonishing, majestic and theatrical décor is inspired by Louis XIV's State Apartment, with numerous references to the Sun King. Sixteen Presidents of the Republic have been elected here, and today, it serves as the meeting place for both deputies and senators during constitutional revisions or presidential addresses.

Often unknown to the public, the Congress' President's Apartment, built at the same time as the Hall of Congress, features a neo-Louis XV décor, characteristic of Versailles. It replaced former apartments of the royal family and was returned to the Palace of Versailles by the National Assembly in 2006.

To mark the 150th anniversary of the Third Republic, a new permanent exhibition will be installed there. Featuring 19th- and 20th-century paintings and sculptures, mostly from the Château's collection, it will offer visitors a unique perspective on parliamentary life under the Third and Fourth Republics.

The Hall of Congress and the Congress' President's Apartment will be open from February 15 to the end of September:

- Every weekend
- Guided tours available on weekdays

The Trianon-sous-Bois wing, redesigned for General de Gaulle in the 1960s, will also be exceptionnally open for self-guided visits every weekend starting April 1.



The Hall of Congress
© Château de Versailles / T. Garnier



The study in the Congress' President's Apartment
© Château de Versailles / T. Garnier

A SERIES OF PODCASTS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Three podcasts, available on all streaming platforms in 2025, will explore the behind-the-scenes story of the Third Republic's government settling in Versailles. Through historical fiction, they will reveal how the republican government coexisted with the grandeur of the former royal residence, focusing on the Hall of Congress as a pivotal site of the Republic between 1875 and 1879.

In addition to the self-guided and guided tours, the Château will host a colloquium and special events during the European Heritage Days, featuring innovative interpretive experiences. Starting in spring 2025, a theatrical tour will also allow families to discover the republican history of the Palace of Versailles in an engaging way.

1875: THE REPUBLIC SEALED IN VERSAILLES

On January 30, 1875, at Versailles, the Chamber of Deputies - based in the palace for four years - adopted an amendment proposed by Deputy Henri Wallon, establishing the election of the President of the Republic by two chambers assembled as the National Assembly, forming Parliament. This amendment cemented the permanence of the Third Republic, which until then had only been a provisional regime.

The Wallon Amendment and the constitutional laws of 1875 had significant consequences, notably altering the role of the Palace of Versailles, which was now to play a part in the exercise of republican power.

THE KINGS' RESIDENCE TRANSFORMED BY THE REPUBLIC

The Paris Commune uprisings of 1871 led the Government and Parliament to remain in Versailles. With the 1875 constitutional laws establishing two chambers, it was decided to install the Senate in the recently renovated Royal Opera House and to build a new hemicycle of the Chamber of Deputies in the South Wing of the Palace. The renovations to the Royal Opera House significantly altered its appearance: the 18th century painted ceiling was replaced with a glass skylight, the orchestra pit was sealed off at stage level, a wall was erected on the front stage, and a new tribune was built.

The Opera House remained in this state until it was returned to the Palace of Versailles by the Senate in the 1950s and restored to its original function as a performance venue.

Built between June and November 1875, the Hall of Congress is located at the heart of the South Wing of the Palace of Versailles. It stands as a prime example of the official architecture of the early Third Republic, blending eclectic style with a palatial spirit. Its décor is closely inspired by the Grand Apartment of Louis XIV, reinforcing the historical continuity of power within the palace.

Inaugurated in 1876, the Hall of Congress served as the venue for the election of the Presidents of the Third and Fourth Republics sixteen times, until 1953. Since 1958, it has been the place where both chambers of the Parliament convene in Congress for constitutional revisions or presidential addresses to elected officials.

Beyond the two hemicycles, the Republic also established an extensive parliamentary infrastructure in Versailles, including apartments for the presidents of the chambers, offices for the parliamentary quaestors and various administrative spaces to support legislative activities.

A LASTING REPUBLICAN HERITAGE

Although Parliament returned to Paris in 1879, Versailles has remained a key site in the exercise of republican power. Beyond hosting the Congress of Parliament, the palace continues to serve the Republic by providing prestigious spaces for state functions and diplomatic events: General de Gaulle renovated the Grand Trianon to accommodate distinguished guests of France, the Hall of Mirrors is the venue for grand state dinners and the palace regularly hosts high-level international meetings, including the annual Choose France summit.



Adolphe Thiers, Léon Bonnat, 1878
© RMN-GP (Château de Versailles) © Gérard Blot



Gaston Doumergue, Marcel Baschet, 1925
© RMN-GP (Château de Versailles) © Gérard Blot

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A PARTNERSHIP WITH LCP-ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE

As Versailles celebrates the 150th anniversary of the Third Republic in 2025, LCP-Assemblée nationale will also mark 25 years since its creation. To commemorate these milestones, the Palace of Versailles and LCP-Assemblée nationale have established a unique partnership. Throughout the year, LCP-Assemblée nationale will broadcast special programs on various themes, including the creation of the Hall of Congress, the history of the Republic in Versailles, and other key moments in France's parliamentary legacy.

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