**PLANNING YOUR VISIT**

**THE PARIS CATACOMBS**

- 2 Avenue du Colonel Henri Rol-Tanguy - 75014 Paris

**Telephone:** +33 (0)1 43 22 47 63

**Website:**
- www.carnavalet.paris.fr
- www.catacombes.paris.fr

**Getting here:**
- Metro and RER: Denfert-Rochereau
- Bus: 38, 68, 74

**Getting there:**
- wwwMuséeCarnavaletCatacombes.paris.fr

**VISITORS GUIDE**

**BOOKING**
- Booking is required for group visits.

**Guided tours and group visits**
- Guided tours: available to groups only if reserved in advance.
- Group visits: permission required.

**Photography and Filming**
- Photography and filming are not permitted on the site, strictly for your own private use.

**Opening hours**
- 10am–8:30pm, except Mondays and some bank holidays.
- Admission starts at 9 am.

**Guided tours and group visits**
- Visitors travel back in time nearly 45 million years. They descend through a succession of rock layers before reaching a limestone bank from the Lutetian geological stage.

**Admission desks close at 7:30pm.**

**Fees:**
- Children under the age of 14 must be accompanied by an adult.
- Children under the age of 4 must be accompanied by an adult.

**Visiting conditions and accessibility**
- The Catacombs are not accessible for persons with reduced mobility.
- It is not recommended for sensitive individuals suffering from heart or respiratory conditions.
- Over 100 steps on both the way down and up.
- Temperature: 14°C.
- Length of the visit: 45 minutes.
- Distance covered: 1.5km

**Warning**
- Any theft or attempted theft of bones from the Catacombs of the City of Paris will be immediately and systematically prosecuted. Any destruction, damage, or theft of persons or property will be investigated in accordance with the laws and regulations in force.

**THE PARIS CATACOMBS**

**THE GEOLICAL SUBSOIL OF PARIS**

- Classified as a historic monument since 1980.
- The ossuary known as the Catacombs was created in the late 18th century in abandoned underground quarries dating from the 15th century in the locality of "Tombe-Issoire".
- The first bones were transferred here from what was the largest Parisian cemetery at the time, the Saints-Innocents Cemetery, located in the Les Halles district. The cemetery was closed in 1780, at the request of the municipality, due to concerns for public safety.
- The Quarry Department, created by a decree of the Royal Council on April 1777 with the aim of protecting and fortifying the Parisian subsoil, was put in charge of choosing and developing the site for the ossuary.
- Little by little, these former limestone quarries began to house the bones from all the cemeteries of central Paris, particularly during the urban development work carried out by Prefect Hausmann, up until 1860. Beginning in the early 19th century, the Catacombs were opened to the public, creating a wave of curiosity that attracted a growing number of visitors.

**THE CATACOMBS AND THEIR HISTORY**

- 4 April 1777: created by a decree of the Royal Council.
- Council on 4 April 1777 with the aim of protecting and fortifying the Parisian subsoil, was put in charge of choosing and developing the site for the ossuary.
- Between street level and that of the Catacombs, visitors travel back in time nearly 45 million years. They descend through a succession of rock layers before reaching a limestone bank from the Lutetian geological stage.
- The name of this stage, which was specifically identified in the Catacombs, comes from the Roman name for Paris, Lutetia. Limestone from the Lutetian stage provides high quality cut stone, commonly referred to as "pierre de Paris" (Parisian stone).
- As you can see on the map above, the underground quarry areas are broken down into zones based on the geological layers encountered: gypsum is used to make plaster, limestone to cut construction stones and chalk is used to make coatings.
Access to the galleries is via a staircase of 150 steps leading 20 metres underground. These long, narrow corridors follow the path of the streets above ground. Signs indicate the names (which often no longer exist) of the streets you are under. At the time, this entire network was referred to as the “Copy of Paris.” Behind these supporting walls of the galleries, you can imagine the hollow, underground space that quarry workers dug deeper and deeper over the centuries.

The area called the “workshop” refers to a part of the quarry where construction work. The number of the worksite, indicated by the inscription “65 G. 1781,” carried out by Charles-Axel Guillaumot in 1781.

When Héricart de Thury developed this area, he created signage indicating from which Parisian cemetery the bones originated. He also created a truly theatrical decor, reminiscent of Antiquity, whereas the decorative arrangement of the bones is in keeping with the medieval ossuary tradition. Along with a few lines reflecting on the fragility of human life, the overall impression is one of a strong sense of respect, meditation and fear.

In 1781, a quarry collapsed, causing the waterways to burst and fall in several places, bringing the water supply to fountains to a halt. In 1783, another collapse brought the waterways to a halt again. In 1771, a quarry was left abandoned, resulting in the construction of a new waterway: the “Copy of Paris.”

The fountain “de la Samaritaine” (of the Samaritan woman) is in fact a well, around which a small circle was designed, surrounded by walls composed of bones from the Vincennes Cemetery. This well provides access to a small groundwater table. The quarry workers used it to make the mortar used in the construction of the bigons.

At the heart of the ossuary, we find signs referring to the events of the French Revolution: the “fighting at the Revillon factory in Faubourg St. Antoine in April 1837,” where working-class protests ended in a massacre, and the “fighting at the Château des Tuileries on 10 August 1792,” where Swiss guards fought against Parisian units. At this time, the ossuary was temporarily used as a morgue where they brought the bodies of those killed in combat.

In the middle of the area called the Crypt of the Passion, or the “Cella rotunda,” is a supporting pillar hidden by skulls and skulls that form a barrel shape. On 4 April 1817, a night concert was organized here between midnight and dawn. The information was circulated in the newspaper and the concert drew over one hundred participants to hear Chopin’s Funeral March and the Dance Macabre by Camille Saint-Saëns, among other pieces. Already at the time, this place fascinated thrill-seeking Parisians.