

Grand Palais

3 Avenue du Général Eisenhower, 75008

Metro: lines 1, 9, 13 / Stations: Franklin-D.-Roosevelt, Champs-Élysées-Clémenceau

Bus: 28, 42, 52, 63, 72, 73, 80, 83, 93

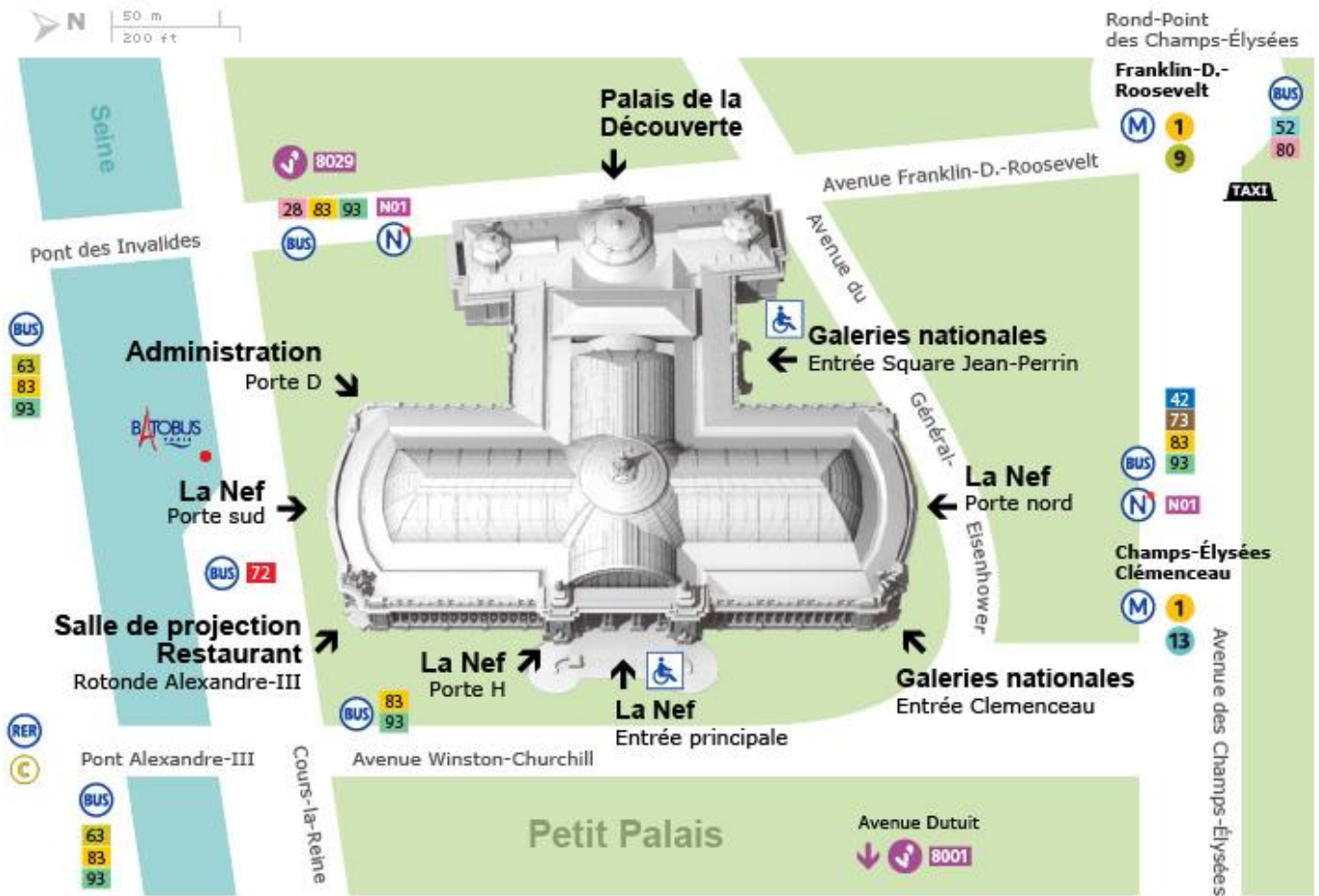
A3 size luggage

RER: line C / Stations: Invalides

VISITOR ENTRANCE

Grand Palais Nave and South East Gallery Winston Churchill Entrance, avenue Winston Churchill

10 am – 8 pm (every day) 13 €



The Grand Palais is a large historic site, exhibition hall and museum complex located at the Champs-Élysées in the 8th arrondissement of Paris, France. Construction of the Grand Palais began in **1897** following the demolition of the Palais de l'Industrie (Palace of Industry) as part of the preparation works for the **Universal Exposition of 1900**, which also included the creation of the adjacent Petit Palais and Pont Alexandre III.

The structure was built in the **style of Beaux-Arts architecture** as taught by the École des Beaux-Arts of Paris. The building reflects the movement's taste for ornate decoration through its stone facades, the formality of its floor planning and the use of techniques that were innovative at the time, such as its glass vault, its structure made of iron and light steel framing, and its use of reinforced concrete.

History

One of its pediments calls it a “**monument dedicated by the Republic to the glory of French art**”, reflecting its original purpose, that of housing the great artistic events of the city of Paris. The competition to choose the architect was fierce and controversial, and ultimately resulted in the contract being awarded to a group of four architects, Henri Deglane, Albert Louvet, Albert Thomas and Charles Girault, each with a separate area of responsibility.

The main space, almost 240 metres long, was constructed with an iron, steel and glass barrel-vaulted roof, making it the last of the large transparent structures inspired by London's Crystal Palace that were necessary for large gatherings of people before the age of electricity.

The exterior of this massive palace combines an imposing **Classical stone façade** with a riot of **Art Nouveau ironwork**, and a number of **allegorical statue groups**. A monumental bronze **quadriga** by Georges Récipon tops each wing of the main façade. The one on the Champs-Élysées side depicts Immortality prevailing over Time, the one on the Seine side Harmony triumphing over Discord.

The grand inauguration took place 1 May 1900, and from the very beginning the palace was the site of different kinds of shows in addition to the intended art exhibitions. These included a riding competition that took place annually from 1901 to 1957, but were mainly dedicated to innovation and modernity: the automobile, aviation, household appliances, and so on. The golden age of the art exhibitions as such lasted for some thirty years, while the last took place in 1947. The first major Henri Matisse retrospective after his death was held at the Grand Palais.

The **structure had problems that started even before it was completed**, mainly as a result of subsidence caused by a **drop in the water table**. The builders attempted to compensate for this subsidence, and for a tendency of the ground to shift, by sinking supporting posts down to firmer soil, since construction could not be delayed. These measures were only partially successful. Further damage occurred once the building was in use. Excessive force applied to structural members during the installation of certain exhibitions such as the Exposition Internationale de la Locomotion Aérienne caused damage, as did acid runoff from the horse shows. Additional problems due to the construction of the building itself revealed themselves over the course of time. **Differential rates of expansion and contraction between cast iron and steel members**, for example, allowed for water to enter, leading to corrosion and further weakening. When finally one of the glass ceiling panels fell in 1993, the main space had to be closed for restoration work, and was not fully reopened to the public until 2007.

Grand Palais during World War I, 1916

The Palais served as a **military hospital during World War I**, employing local artists who had not been deployed to the front to decorate hospital rooms or to make moulds for prosthetic limbs.

The Nazis put the Palais to use during the Occupation of France in World War II. First used as a truck depot, the Palais then housed two Nazi propaganda exhibitions.

The Parisian resistance used the Grand Palais as a headquarters during the Liberation of Paris. On 23 August 1944 an advancing German column was fired upon from a window on the Avenue de Sèlves, and the Germans responded with a tank attack upon the Palais. The attack ignited hay that was set up for a circus show, and over the next 48 hours, thick black smoke from the fire caused serious damage to the building. By 26 August, American jeeps were parked in the nave, followed by tanks from the French 2nd Armored Division, completing the liberation of the building.