

The Magnificent Louvre

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The Louvre Museum is home to some of the finest works of art in the history of the world. Having been built during the 17th and 18th Centuries according to the popular Baroque architecture of the European continent, it is located on the banks of the Sen River in Paris. It is reported that the number of visitors to the Louvre Museum annually exceeds 10 million, which is one of the top tourist attractions in Paris.

History

The Louvre Palace, built by King Philip II in 1190 for use as a fortress, was rebuilt by King Francis I in the 16th century as a royal palace. He was passionate about collecting fine works of art and used his artwork to decorate the palace, and all sub-



sequent French monarchs since Francis I have contributed to the expansion of the Louvre by adding new parts to the palace. According to Baroque architecture, Louis XIII and Louis XIV took the lead in renovating the Louvre. King Louis XIV who captured the collection of art work which belonged to King Charles I of England during the English Civil War,

placed the said collection at the Louvre Palace.

Following the declaration of Versailles as the official royal residence by King Louis XIV in 1682, the Louvre Palace, which was used as an art gallery, has been used regularly for art exhibitions. In August 1793, the National Assembly of France opened the Louvre Palace as a museum with a collection of 537 paintings. However, due to structural problems, the Louvre Museum was closed in 1796, and at the beginning of the 19th century, Emperor Napo-

leon Bonaparte re-opened it to the public as a 'Napoleon Museum' with a more extensive collection of works of art.

However, with the signing of the Treaty of Fontainebleau in 1815, Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte lost his sovereignty, and works of art that he had brought from countries such as Belgium, Italy, Austria, and Prussia, had to be returned. The Napoleon Museum was renamed as the Louvre Museum during this period, and the Museum, with its continuously expanded buildings, was completed during the reign of King Napoleon III in the middle of the 19th century.

Works of art

The Louvre houses many works of art, including Egyptian antiquities, ancient Greek and Roman statues, paintings by ancient artists (great painters who lived in Europe before the 19th Century), crowns of the French royal family, and other royal ornaments. Louvre also houses around 35,000 works of art from the 6th to the 19th Century, including Oriental antiquities, Egyptian antiquities, Greek, Etruscan and Roman antiquities, Islamic art, statues, decorative works, paintings, and illustrations.

The Louvre's most famous work of art is, without a doubt, the 'Mona Lisa' painted by Leonardo da Vinci. The painting which is 21 inches wide and 30 inches high, is placed in bulletproof glass. In addition, it houses ancient Greek statues such as 'Venus de



Milo' and 'Winged Victory of Samothrace', a 7-foot-tall stone slab of Hammurabi, and the Italian statue of 'The Dying Slave' by Michael Angelo and da Vinci's painting 'Virgin and Child with St. Anne'.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Louvre Museum is a masterpiece that brings together ages. The ruins of the ancient fort can still be seen beneath the main buildings built accord-

ing to Baroque architecture.

The main entrance to the museum has been redesigned with a new architectural style, following a renovation plan called 'The Grand Louvre', which was commissioned in 1983. As a result, the Louvre Pyramid and the ground floor entrance hall were added to the Museum. Opened in 1988, the main Louvre pyramid is made entirely of glass. The roof window of the adjoining ground floor entrance hall is shaped like an inverted pyramid, and was opened in 1993.

