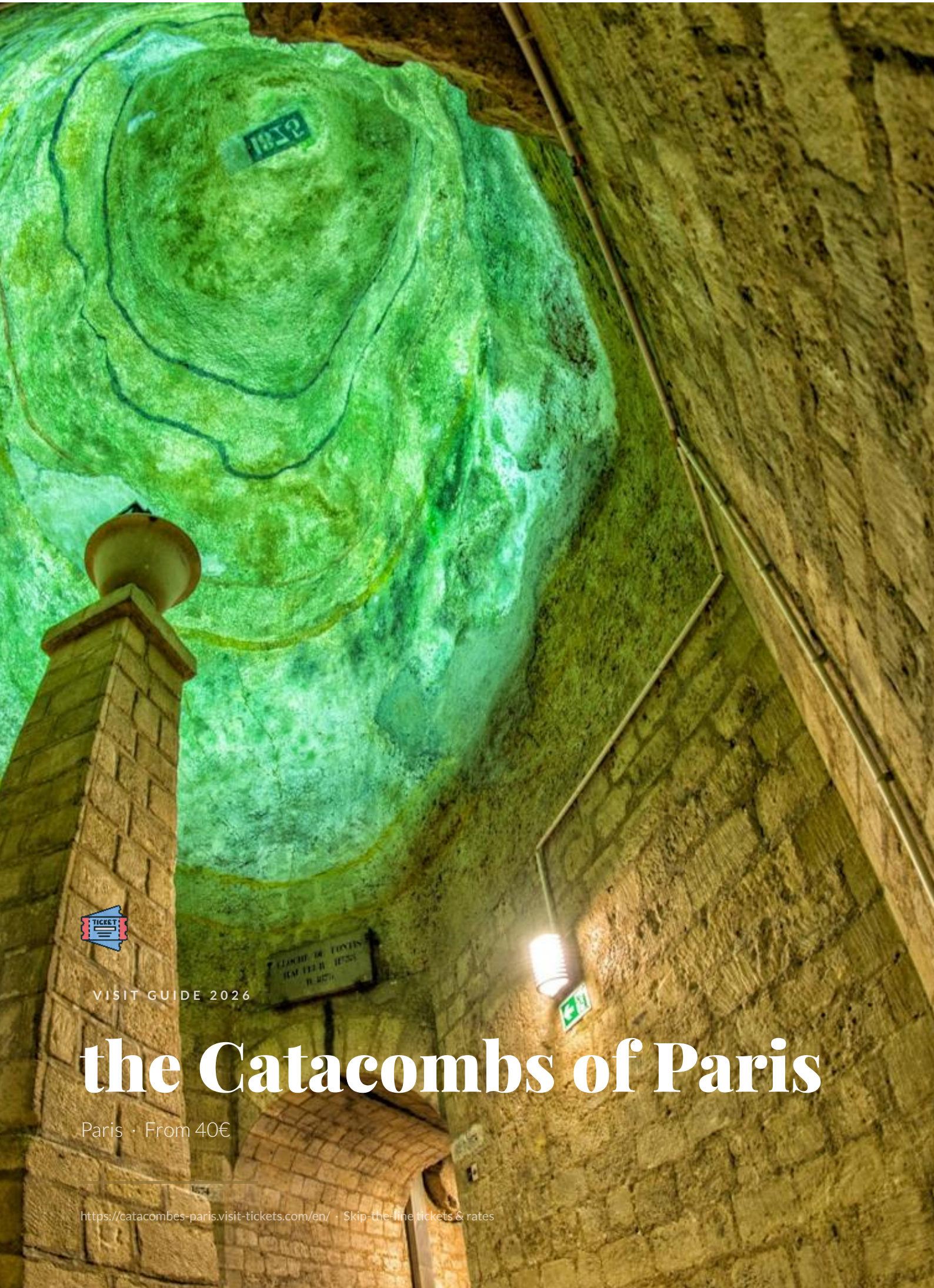


VISIT GUIDE 2026

the Catacombs of Paris

Paris · From 40€

https://catacombes-paris.visit-tickets.com/en/ · Skip-the-line tickets & rates



History & experience

ORIGIN & HISTORY

From Careers to the Monumental Ossuary

GOOGLE 4.1 ★★★★☆ 11 761 reviews

TIQETS 4.6 ★★★★★ 1 732 reviews

Beneath the cobblestones of Place Denfert-Rochereau lies one of the world's largest ossuaries, born out of a sanitary and logistical necessity in the 18th century. At the time, Paris was suffering from critical saturation of its cemeteries, notably the famous **Cimetière des Saints-Innocents**, located in the very heart of the city. The accumulation of bodies there caused major unsanitary conditions, with common graves reaching ten meters in depth and ground levels raised two meters above the surrounding streets.

In response to this health crisis, the government decided in 1786 to transfer the remains to old underground quarries located beneath the Montsourge plain, then outside the walls of the capital. This colossal transfer gathered the bones of **six million individuals**, evacuated from various Parisian cemeteries until 1861. The quarry workers organized these remains with remarkable architectural rigor, creating hedges of bones that today form impressive walls.

The site, open to the public since 1809, is technically a network of building stone quarry galleries, extracted over centuries to construct Paris. The term "catacombs" is historically inaccurate, as it refers to Roman necropolises, but became established by analogy. The visitable portion represents only **0.5% of the total network** of Parisian quarries, which extends for nearly 300 kilometers beneath the city.

Today, this unique site is classified as a museum of the City of Paris. It testifies not only to Parisian funeral management but also to the underground mining industry that shaped the capital's architecture. Major restoration work has recently been undertaken to preserve this exceptional heritage fragility.

THE EXPERIENCE

The moment you cross the threshold, the atmosphere changes dramatically. You leave behind the muffled noise of the surface to enter a mineral silence, punctuated only by your footsteps and the distant breath of air circulating through the galleries. The temperature drops sharply to **14 °C constant**, creating an immediate sense of coolness that contrasts with the summer heat or Parisian winter. This thermal stability is due to the thickness of the limestone rock, which naturally insulates the depths.

Dim light guides your gaze toward symmetrical alignments of skulls and femurs, stacked with astonishing geometric precision. The space is narrow, sometimes confining, but the immersive audioguide accompanies you with theatrical voices that bring the history of the place to life. It is a total sensory experience, where the cold, the silence, and the massive presence of Paris's ancestors create a unique **mystical and contemplative** ambiance.



PREPARE YOUR VISIT

Practical information

ADDRESS

14th arrondissement · Metro: Denfert-Rochereau (Lines 4, 6, 10) or Mouton-Duvernet (Line 6). The entrance is located directly under the square.

OPENING HOURS

Hours vary by season. Online booking is mandatory as no tickets are sold on site.

FARES

Free child entry depending on age (check variants). {promo}.

VISIT DURATION

Allow 1 hour for the complete underground route visit. This includes descending 131 steps and climbing 112 steps, as well as exploring the galleries 20 meters u

PHOTOS

Photography is allowed without flash to preserve the atmosphere. Professional cameras with tripods are generally discouraged so as not to hinder the restricted

AUDIENCE

Not recommended for people with claustrophobia or suffering from heart failure. Not allowed for unaccompanied children under 14. The damp floor requires closed-

HOW TO GET THERE

Access & transport

Metro / RER

: Denfert-Rochereau — 1 min à pied

Gare Montparnasse (9 min) · Paris Austerlitz RER (12 min)

Bus

: Denfert-Rochereau — 1 min à pied

Gare Montparnasse (13 min) · Paris Austerlitz RER (19 min)

Car

Gare Montparnasse (7 min) · Paris Austerlitz RER (12 min)

Vélib / Bike

Gare Montparnasse (8 min) · Paris Austerlitz RER (14 min)

LOCALISATION

Où se trouve the Catacombs of Paris ?



📍 1, Avenue du Colonel Henri Rol-Tanguy — 75014 Paris

🌐 48°50.030′ N, 2°19.945′ E



ORGANIZATION

Understanding the Visit Structure

Surface Level (Reception)

The reception is located at Place Denfert-Rochereau. This is where you pick up your audioguide and have your bag checked (maximum size 40x30 cm). There is no cloakroom or luggage storage, so travel light. Restrooms are available at the entrance.

Main Gallery (Ossuary)

The heart of the visit, stretching 1.5 km in length. You walk through galleries where bones are arranged in regular hedges. This is where you observe historical inscriptions and architectural details of the former quarries. The atmosphere is calm and contemplative.

Exit (Av. René-Coty)

The final climb of 112 steps leads you to the exit. A systematic bag check may be conducted to ensure no bones have been taken. You emerge directly onto Avenue René-Coty, near Parc Montsouris.

ACCESSIBILITY

♿ **Disabled Access**

Difficult access due to 131 steps down and 112 up with no elevator; narrow spiral staircases.

👨‍👩‍👧 **Families**

Not allowed for unaccompanied children under 14; not recommended for those under 10 due to visible b

🎧 **Audio guide**

French, English, Spanish, German



Must-sees

SELECTION

Must-Sees on the Underground Tour

01 Main Galleries

The Bone Galleries

This is the iconic image of the Catacombs. Thousands of skulls and femurs are stacked with mathematical precision. Observe the regularity of the piles, which testify to the meticulous work of the quarrymen responsible for the transfer. The view is breathtaking and commands respect.

> 💡 Touching the bones is forbidden, a strict rule to preserve the site. A theft can result in a fine of up to **€15,000** according to the Penal Code.

02 Technical section

The Arcueil Aqueduct

Running alongside certain galleries, this historical aqueduct once supplied Paris with water. Its robust architecture contrasts with the fragility of the neighboring bones. The audioguide explains how water circulated through these underground conduits before the site became an ossuary.

> 💡 The water from this aqueduct was considered very pure and sought after by 18th-century Parisians for its superior quality compared to that of surface wells.

03 Overview of the route

The Wall Inscriptions

On the stone walls, you can read sentences, dates, and dedications left by visitors since 1809. These writings tell the emotional history of the place, ranging from melancholic poems to love messages. Take the time to read them carefully.

> 💡 Some inscriptions date back to the French Revolution, recalling the turbulent political context during the creation of the ossuary.

04 Entrance

The Spiral Descent

The entrance itself is a feat of engineering. The 131 spiral steps descend to a depth of 20 meters. It is a moment of physical and psychological transition, preparing the visitor for immersion into the underground world. The staircase is narrow and damp.

> 💡 This spiral configuration allows for managing the flow of the 200 visitors authorized simultaneously, ensuring maximum safety in a confined space.

05 Technical Zones

The Pillars of Career

Here, you can see the remnants of building stone extraction. The massive pillars still support the roofs of Paris. They remind us that these galleries were first active mines before becoming a place of eternal rest. The raw texture of the limestone is visible.

> 💡 The stone extracted here was used to build many Parisian monuments, creating a direct link between the ground and the buildings on the surface.

06 Restricted Area

The Sacellum (Guided Tours)

Accessible only during specific guided tours, this crypt houses relics and more intimate decorative elements. It is a darker and more mysterious space than the standard route, offering an additional dimension to the site's religious history.

> 💡 The Sacellum is often associated with ancient rituals, although its exact use remains a subject of debate among local historians.

07 Restricted Area

The Restorers' Workshop

Visible during certain special tours, this workshop showcases ongoing conservation work. It reveals how experts stabilize the bone walls and treat humidity. It offers a fascinating glimpse into the science behind heritage preservation.

> 💡 Restorers use modern materials invisible to the naked eye to consolidate structures without altering the site's historical appearance.

08 Exterior

The Exit onto Avenue René-Coty

The final ascent projects you directly into the Montparnasse district. The contrast between the underground darkness and natural light is striking. It's time to gather your thoughts before continuing your day in Paris.

> 💡 Many visitors feel an immediate sense of relief upon seeing the sky, a psychological phenomenon linked to the mild claustrophobia induced by the confined space.

TIPS

Preparing Your Descent Properly

TIMING

Please arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled time slot. Capacity is limited to 200 people, and no late arrivals are tolerated without the risk of losing your ticket.

TICKET

Be sure to book online several weeks in advance, especially during peak season. No tickets are sold on site.

ROUTE

Follow the one-way direction of the 1.5 km route. Do not turn around, as this disrupts the flow of other visitors and can cause bottlenecks in the narrow galleries.

PHOTO

Photograph the bone hedges without flash to preserve the atmosphere. Avoid professional cameras with tripods that block the passageway.

BREAK

Have your meal before the visit, as there is no café or restaurant inside. Parc Montsouris is ideal for a digestive break after the tour.

CHILDREN

Visitors under 14 must be accompanied. The visit is not recommended for children under 10, as the bones may be frightening to young children.

AUDIOGUIDE

Turn on the audioguide as soon as you enter. It is included in the price and essential for understanding the history of the quarries and the wall inscriptions.

COMFORT

Wear comfortable sneakers and a light jacket. It is constantly 14°C, and the ground is wet and slippery. Avoid high heels.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Do I really need to book in advance?

Yes, online booking is mandatory with a strict time slot. No tickets are sold at the on-site ticket office, making advance purchase essential to guarantee your access. We recommend booking as soon as sales open to secure

What happens if I am late?

As the safety capacity is limited to 200 people on site, lateness results in the loss of the ticket without refund. It is crucial to arrive a few minutes before your time slot to pass security and avoid being turned away

Is there a promotion currently running?

Standard fares are €40 per person for access with audioguide. Discounts may exist for groups or Paris residents, but you must consult the specific conditions when booking online. Always check the available fare variants.

Can I choose my time slot freely?

No, time slots are set by the site and often limited in number. You must select a specific available time when purchasing. Once the ticket is acquired, changing the date or time depends on the flexibility conditions of y

How long does the visit to the Catacombs take?

The official visit lasts approximately 1 hour. This time covers the 1.7 km route through the galleries, the descent of 131 steps, and the climb back up 112 steps. Plan for this exact duration as departures are strictly m

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

A historically inaccurate name

The term "catacombs" is a misnomer. Technically, it refers to Roman necropolises. Here, we are in **stone quarries** converted into a municipal ossuary. The name comes by analogy with the underground sites of Rome, but the origin is purely utilitarian.

A tiny fraction of the network

What you visit represents only **0.5% of Paris's quarries**. Beneath the city, nearly 300 km of galleries extend, many of which are filled in or collapsed. Only this small portion is secured and open to the public.

The law of silence and respect

Any attempt to steal bones is severely punished. According to Article 225-17 of the Penal Code, desecration of graves is punishable by one year of imprisonment and a **€15,000 fine**. Bags are searched upon exit.

Active restoration in 2025

The site is fragile and undergoing major conservation work. In 2024, two bone walls were restored. These efforts ensure the longevity of the site for future generations, demonstrating that the ossuary remains a living construction site.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

The exit from the Catacombs is located at 21 bis avenue René-Coty, just a few minutes' walk from **Parc Montsouris**. This ideal green space allows you to recover physically after the effort of climbing the 112 steps, thanks to its shaded paths and central pond. To extend the cultural experience, the **Musée Rodin** is nearby, offering an elegant artistic break before returning to the surface. If you are hungry, Place Denfert-Rochereau offers numerous restaurants for lunch before your strict time slot. Finally, the **Église Saint-Sulpice**, an iconic historical monument of the neighborhood, is perfect for exploring Parisian architecture right after your underground visit.



Leaving the Catacombs is a slow ascent back toward the light after having touched, with your fingertips, the collective memory of Paris. This hour spent underground leaves a lasting imprint, blending a historical shiver with serenity in the face of the ephemeral. Whether you are a history enthusiast or simply curious, this dive into the bowels of the capital offers a unique perspective on the city and its past inhabitants. Do not forget: you are not merely visiting a monument; you are walking among the **six million souls** who built Paris.