

Expo playmobil

A STORY OF EMPIRES



VISITOR
GUIDE

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-16.11.25

MUSÉE
WELLINGTON

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WELCOME TO THE EXHIBITION

"PLAYMOBIL, A STORY OF EMPIRES !"

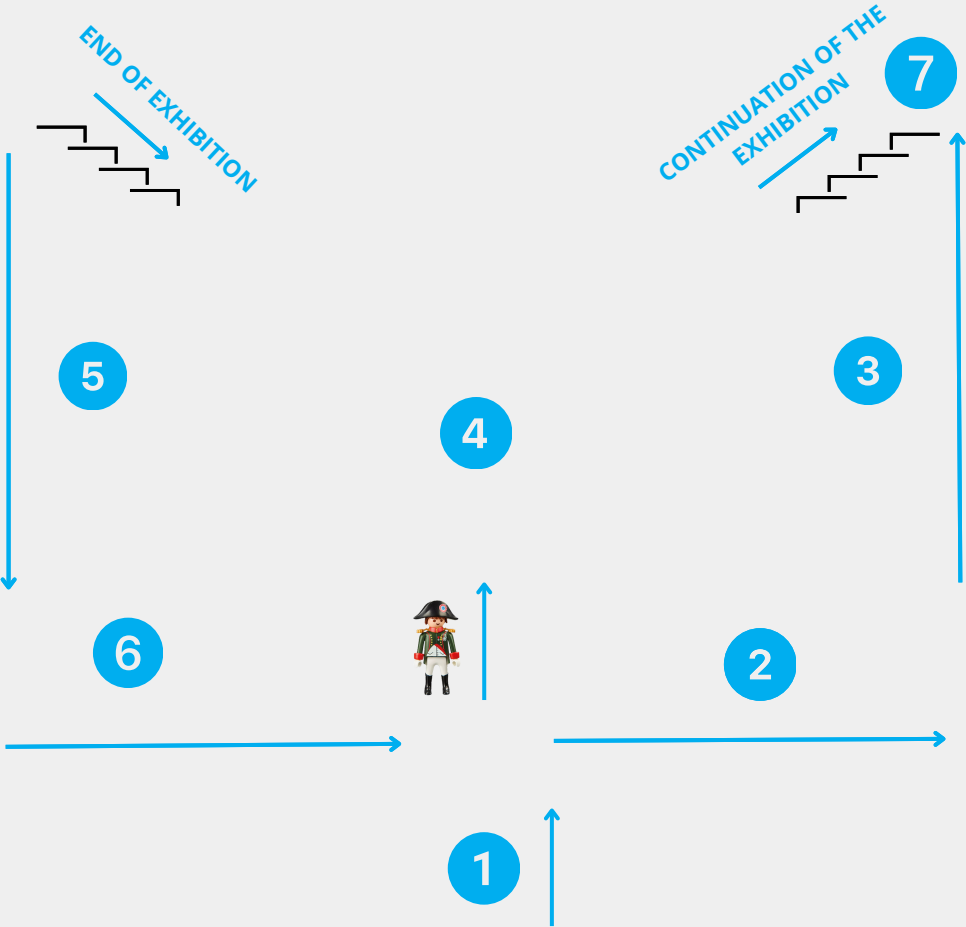
This temporary exhibition explores the cultural links between Antiquity and the Napoleonic period through PLAYMOBIL dioramas and historical objects.

During your visit, you'll discover the three great civilisations of the Mediterranean basin - Egypt, Greece and Rome - which inspired Napoleon and his contemporaries throughout their lives. You will also travel through the history of Napoleon Bonaparte, who dreamt of himself as the new Caesar of a Roman Empire resurrected in his own image.

We hope you enjoy our exhibition as much as we enjoyed creating it.



THE VISIT DIRECTION



ENTRANCE / EXIT

THE LIGHTHOUSE OF ALEXANDRIA

The Alexandria lighthouse was built between -299 and -289 on the Pharos peninsula by Ptolemy I, Alexander the Great's successor in Egypt.

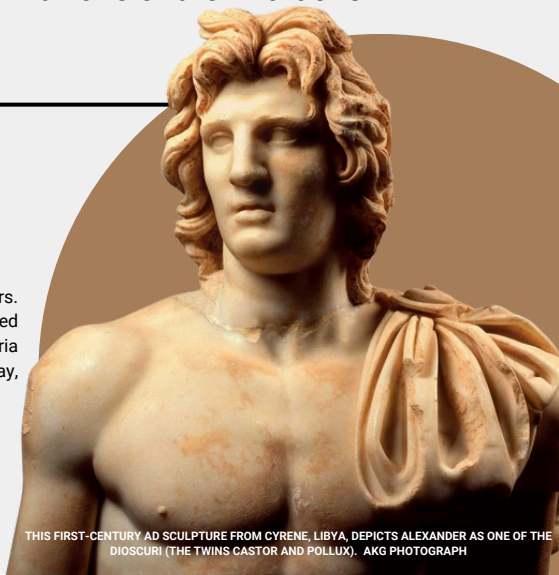
The monument represents the oikouménê, the universal empire of which Alexander the Great had dreamed. In keeping with this universal vision, the Mouseïon, whose aim was to bring together all the world's knowledge in a single place, was built nearby.

The lighthouse, considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, was built to guide sailors from all over the known world to Alexandria, and at the same time to assert its power.

The Pharos peninsula gave its name to the buildings that still dot the coast today. The Ptolemies, descendants of General Ptolemy, a close associate of Alexander the Great, ruled Egypt after Alexander's death and succeeded to the throne of the Pharaohs.

Alexander the Great

Alexander the Great was one of history's greatest conquerors. King of Macedonia, he seized the Persian Empire and pushed his conquests as far as India. In 331 BC, he founded Alexandria in Egypt, which became the capital under the Ptolemies. Today, the city is home to over 5 million inhabitants.



THIS FIRST-CENTURY AD SCULPTURE FROM CYRENE, LIBYA, DEPICTS ALEXANDER AS ONE OF THE DIOSCURI (THE TWINS CASTOR AND POLLUX). AKG PHOTOGRAPH

This dynasty introduced Greek culture to Egypt and built the most prestigious buildings in Alexandria, such as the great library of the Mouseion. It was this prestige that Cleopatra VII, the last ruler of this lineage, sought to regain, before her story came to a tragic end.

The Greek geographer Strabo tells us that the lighthouse was built of white stone, which hardens in contact with water.

Researchers speculate that the lighthouse had a square, slightly pyramidal base, topped by an octagonal level, ending in a small round tower crowned by an unidentified statue (perhaps of Zeus or Poseidon).

Its summit reached 135 metres, and its fire could be seen from a distance of 50 kilometers.

The lighthouse collapsed in the 14th century, following several earthquakes. Its remains lie beneath the sea.

The Alexandria lighthouse featured in "PLAYMOBIL, a history of Empires!", guided you to our exhibition, just as the original would have done with the sailors of antiquity, 2,000 years ago.



REPRESENTATIONS OF THE LIGHTHOUSE. MOSAIC IN ST MARK'S BASILICA, VENICE.

The Pharaohs

The pyramids are the most emblematic monuments of Pharaonic Egypt. The most imposing of these is that of Pharaoh Khufu, built around 2560 BC.

It was during the period of the Old Egyptian Empire (2700 BC to 2200 BC) that the Pharaohs established a powerful authority.

The country was controlled by an elite in the service of the Pharaohs, including scribes, priests, high officials and members of the royal family.

Pharaoh Djoser of the third dynasty ordered the construction of the first pyramid at Saqqarah around 2680 BC, designed by the architect Imhotep, which would be divided 2,000 years later. The elite, seeking to imitate the Pharaoh, had tombs called “mastaba” erected near the pyramids.

The wealthy Egyptian devoted his life to preparing for his post-mortem existence. For him, true life takes place alongside the gods, once he has left this world. This eternal life requires meticulous preparation.



STATUETTE OF PHARAOH KHUFU, FOUND IN 1903 AT ABYDOS, EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO.

Pharaoh Cheops

His reign was marked by the construction of the Great Pyramid of Giza, one of the most impressive monuments in history. Originally 146.6 metres high (now 138 metres), it was the tallest human structure for almost 4,000 years. Khufu remains a mysterious figure, as few records of his life and reign have survived.

He must have a mastaba (a burial place that facilitates the ritual and ensures the survival of the soul), have the name of the deceased inscribed and the body must be preserved through mummification.

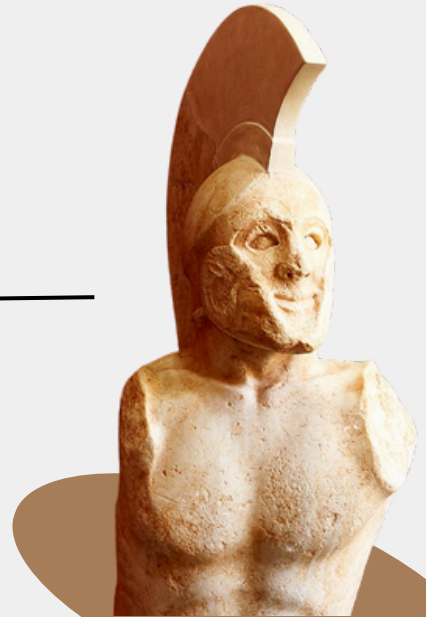
Later, a series of tools will be available to keep the soul alive, including: Ouchehtis (small statuettes representing a servant in the afterlife), the Book of the Dead, wall paintings, the cult practised by your descendants and offerings.



THE BATTLE OF THERMOPYLAE

The Battle of Thermopylae, in 480 BC, is very famous. It pitted the Greek Empire against the Persian Empire, led by King Xerxes I. 300 Spartan soldiers, led by their King Leonidas, fought with allies from the city of Thespia against the huge Persian army.

The Greeks and Persians had long been enemies and had fought several times. These wars began because the Greek cities of Asia rebelled against the Persians. After crushing the rebellion, the Persians sought revenge and launched two great invasions, first under King Darius I and then under Xerxes I. But the Greeks, led by Athens and Sparta, won these battles.



HELMETED HOPLITE KNOWN AS
'LEONIDAS', EARLY 5TH CENTURY BC,
SPARTA ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM.

Leonidas I of Sparta

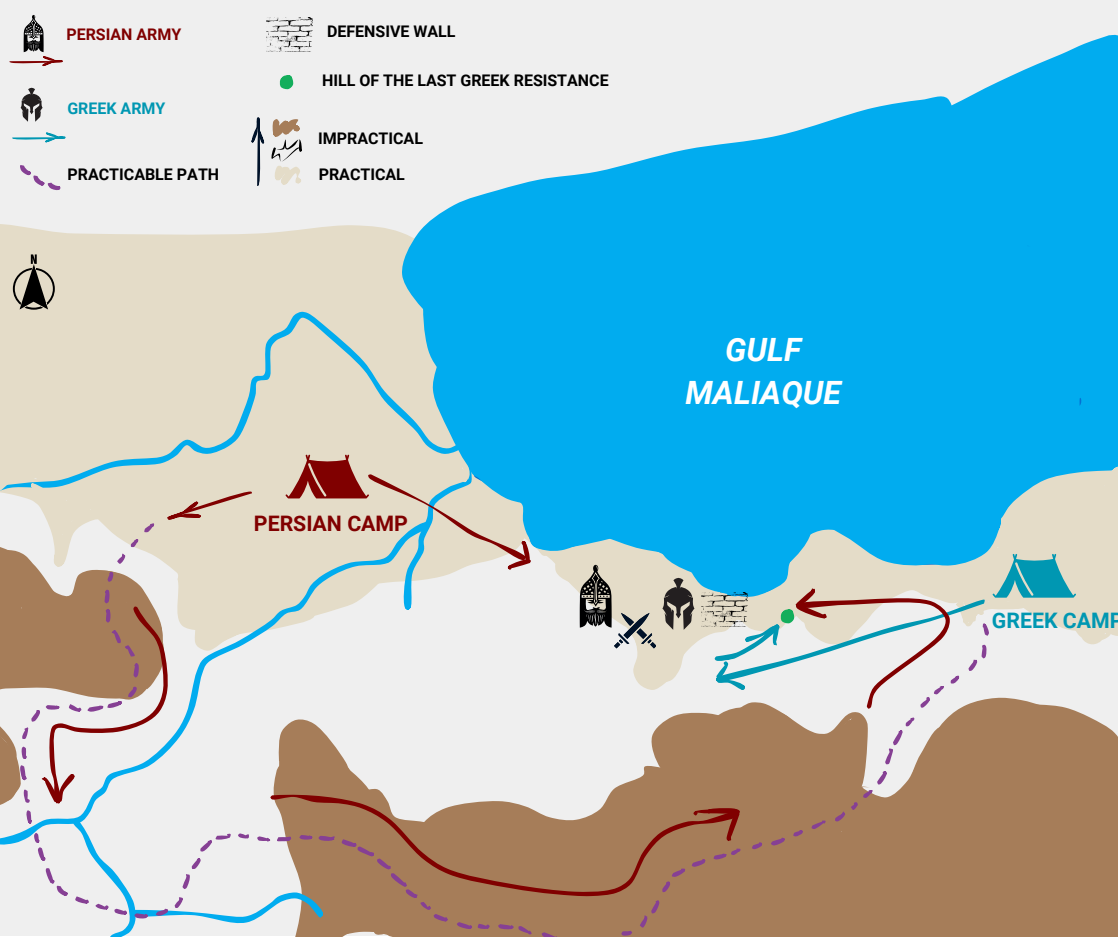
Leonidas I was one of the kings of Sparta in the Agiades dynasty, reigning between around 490 BC and 480 BC. Heir to a prestigious lineage, he followed the rigorous Spartan education of the Agôgê, which trained citizens in combat and military discipline.

Today, Leonidas remains a symbol of the Spartan ideal and total commitment to the city.

His legacy lives on in Greek history, where his name is associated with discipline and bravery. In Sparta, a statue is dedicated to him, testifying to his importance in the history of ancient Greece.

At the Battle of Thermopylae, the Spartans managed to hold off the Persians in a narrow pass for three days, killing around 20,000 Persian soldiers. But at the end of the battle, all the Spartans died. Their courage and sacrifice became a symbol of heroism and the fight for freedom.

This battle enabled the Greeks to prepare for other battles. Even though Athens was taken by the Persians, the Greeks managed to win the battle of Salamis in 480 BC, followed by the battle of Plataea in 479 BC. Finally, it was Alexander the Great, King of Macedonia, who conquered the Persian Empire between 334 and 331 BC, after having conquered Greece.



ATHENS

Greek civilisation bequeathed us the concept of democracy, born in Athens in the 7th century BC. The term 'democracy' comes from the Greek words δῆμος / dêmos ('the people') and κράτος / krátos ('power, might'). This system implies that decisions are taken by the citizens, who are thus involved in the management of their affairs and preoccupied with politics.

In Greece, this system excluded women, slaves and foreigners. In practice, Athenian democracy therefore only affected a minority of the population, who gathered in the ecclesia to vote on the laws.

Athens became one of the main Greek cities and united the other cities within the League of Delos, created after the Medieval wars

as a defensive league against the Persian Empire. We are now entering the classical period of Greek history (between 483 BC and 338 BC).

Pericles, an Athenian politician, undertook major works, in particular the reconstruction of the Acropolis, which had been destroyed by the Persians in 480 BC.

The idea of the artist as an individual talent emerged, as many producers signed their works and enjoyed a highly respected social position. Painted vases fell into two main styles: the black figure and then the red figure.

The domination of Athens led to the widespread adoption of its model. The allies were forced to use Athens' coins and units of weight and measure.

In addition, the judicial authority and the treasury of the League of Delos were transferred to Athens. The Acropolis, rebuilt under Pericles, became the symbol of this power.

In 447 BC, work began on the construction of the Parthenon. This temple, which housed the treasure of the League of Delos, was built under the direction of the architect Phidias. More than 1,000 workers were mobilised to complete this colossal project, using a total of 22,000 tonnes of marble.

The Erechtheion, which contained a monumental statue of Athena in ivory, included

Its pediments depict the birth of Athena, the battle between Athena and Poseidon for possession of Attica, and Athena offering the olive tree to the Athenians.

It is also famous for its caryatids, columns sculpted in the shape of women.

The Athenian empire fell in 404 BC when Athens was defeated by Sparta at the end of the Peloponnesian War.



THE ACROPOLIS OF ATHENS IN ANCIENT GREECE - J.-L. CHARMET

THE BATTLE OF ACTIUM

The Battle of Actium left a lasting imprint on Antiquity, just as the Battle of Waterloo did in the 19th century. It is considered one of the most decisive battles in history.

It was a naval battle that took place on 2 September 31 BC, during the Roman Civil War. It took place near Actium, on the west coast of Greece. The assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC left two strong men after the defeat of Caesar's enemies.

Cleopatra

Cleopatra VII was the last Queen of Egypt and an exceptional sovereign for her intelligence and diplomacy. Ascending the throne in 51 BC, she consolidated her power by forming an alliance with Julius Caesar, with whom she had a son, Caesarion.

Multilingual and cultured, she preserved her kingdom's independence from Rome, making her one of the most fascinating figures in ancient history.



The first was Mark Antony, a general close to Caesar, who seduced Cleopatra VII, and the second was Octavian, nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar. The two men shared the immense territory of the Roman Republic: Octavian ruled the West, while Mark Antony controlled the East. Cleopatra VII had great ambitions for her son Caesarion, Julius Caesar's only biological heir, who could one day claim his Roman heritage.

To prevent this from happening, Octavian set about publicly denigrating Mark Antony, but above all targeted Cleopatra VII, the 'Oriental', whom he accused of using her charms to influence Mark Antony to make concessions that would be detrimental to Rome. Octavian rallied the Senate, announced the deposition of Mark Antony and declared war on Egypt. Through a series of naval manoeuvres, General Agrippa cut

Mark Antony off from Egypt and isolated him in the Gulf of Ambracia.

Mark Antony's army was made up of Romans as well as client peoples, peoples 'free' under Roman rule such as the Jews, Pontics and Moors, which weakened the cohesion of his army.

Her fleet consisted of approximately 230 ships, 60 of which were supplied by Cleopatra VII, carrying almost 20,000 infantrymen and 2,000 archers. His ships were in poor condition and there was a shortage of crewmen as a result of diseases that had taken their toll on the rowers.

Octavian assembled 400 ships carrying 40,000 Roman legionaries, more experienced and with higher morale, under the command of Agrippa. His ships were lighter and faster.

Mark Antony wants to break Octavian's blockade in order to save Cleopatra's ship, which contains the lovers' treasure.

Afterwards, he hopes to lead a land battle to save Cleopatra's ship, which contains the treasure of the two lovers.

Mark Antony leads his right wing, with which he intends to deliver the breaking blow. His centre was commanded by his seconds Marcus Octavius and Marcus Insteius and his left by Caius Sosius.

On Octavian's side, Agrippa led the left wing directly in front of Mark Antony, while the

The centre was held by Lucius Arruntius and the right was under the command of Marcus Lurius, where Octavian was also present.

The confrontation began at midday when Mark Antony's fleet began to move. Several ships tried to isolate Mark Antony's flagship, while Agrippa, taking advantage of his numerical advantage, withdrew units from his second line to carry out a rolling manoeuvre to his left.



RELIEFS COMMEMORATING THE BATTLE OF ACTIUM DISCOVERED IN
AVELLINO, CARRARA MARBLE, TIBERIAN PERIOD.

Publicola, in charge of Mark Antony's right, withdrew and fled towards the open sea. Octavian adopted a similar approach, rolling up his opponent's left wing. As the fighting concentrated on the wings, the centre of the melee became exposed. Cleopatra VII seized the opportunity to flee at around 3pm, thus preserving her treasure. Mark Antony then broke free from the melee and followed the Queen of Egypt, abandoning his flagship for a faster ship.

The battle continued but, seeing their leaders flee, Mark Antony's fleet and army finally surrendered.

According to the Roman historian Plutarch, 5,000 soldiers were killed, while Orosius puts the figure at 12,000. Mark Antony and Cleopatra found themselves back in Egypt, with no army to back up their claims. A year later, when Octavian invaded Egypt, they chose to commit suicide.

*M*ark Antony



MARBLE BUST ON
PEDESTAL OF THE
ROMAN GENERAL
MARK ANTONY

THE COLISEUM

The Colosseum, also known as the Flavian amphitheatre (amphitheatrum Flavium), is located in the heart of Rome. Known the world over, it represents the prosperity of the Roman Empire and bears witness to the entertainment culture of the ancient world.

Construction began between 70 and 72, under Emperor Vespasian, and was completed in 80, under Titus. Domitian modernised it between 81 and 96. The name Flavian amphitheatre derives from the surname (gens Flavii) of the Emperor Vespasian and his sons Titus and Domitian.

This immense edifice served as both a utilitarian infrastructure and a symbol of power. It could accommodate around 50,000 spectators, who attended the venationes (wild animal fights), munera (gladiatorial fights), and other events.

naumachies (naval battles) as well as executions of the condemned and dramas inspired by mythology.



ILLUSTRATION OF THE COLISEUM

In use for almost 500 years, it ceased to be used in the early Middle Ages.

Over time, it was used for a variety of purposes, including housing, craftsmen's workshops, the headquarters of a religious order, a fortress, a quarry and then a shrine dedicated to the martyrs of Christianity.

Napoleon, a keen antiquarian, mobilised 1,800 men to restore the building and excavate the arena between 1810 and 1814.

In 1807, the façade was reinforced with bricks. His nephew Napoleon III, whose troops occupied Rome from 1849 to 1870 to protect the Pope, continued the restoration and excavation work. The arena was excavated again in 1874, then completely cleared by Mussolini in the 1930s for propaganda purposes. In 1995, a major stabilisation and restoration project enabled 85% of the monument to be opened to the public.

Today, the Colosseum is visited by over 7,600,000 tourists every year.



HORSE RACES

We know that horse racing is an ancient form of entertainment, as Homer mentions a chariot race in the Iliad in the 8th century BC.

The first permanent racecourse in Rome was established by King Tarquin the Elder in 599 BC. It was here that the ludi circenses took place, which included horse and chariot races, athletics, wrestling and stage games.

The races quickly became a real Roman passion, with teams wearing colours (white, green, red and blue) and being supported in the same way as a football club today.



PORTRAIT IMAGINE PAR GUILLAUME ROUILLE ÉDITEUR
L'ONNAIS DE LA RENAISSANCE (V 1916-1959)

Tarquin l'Ancien

Tarquin the Elder was the fifth King of Rome, reigning from 616 BC to 578 BC. Of Etruscan origin, he introduced numerous reforms and major works, including the construction of the Circus Maximus and the extension of Rome's drainage system. Under his reign, the city developed both politically and militarily. Murdered by his predecessor's sons, his legacy was carried on by his successor, Servius Tullius. Today, he remains a key figure in royal Rome, marking the transition between Etruscan influence and the rise of Roman power.

It was Julius Caesar and the Emperor Augustus who gave it its definitive form: a circus. This was equipped with carceres (cages), twelve starting stalls and grandstands.

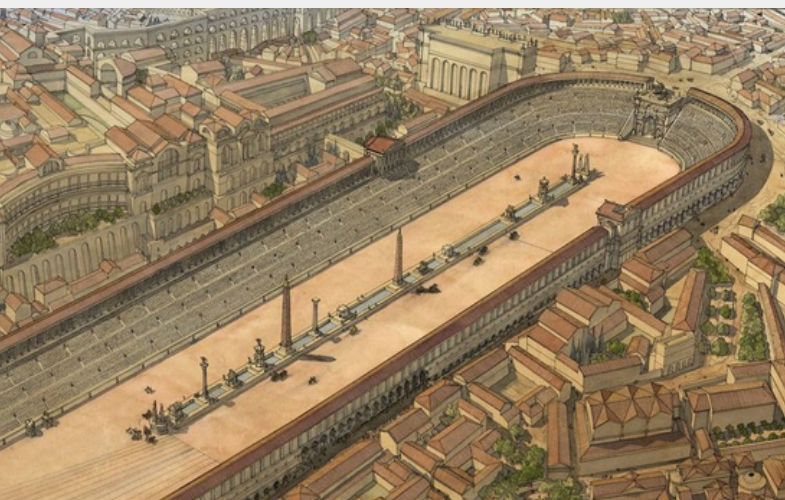
The spina divided the arena in two, surrounded by two metae (bollards) adorned with statues, one of which represented the goddess Pollentia (goddess of power).

A fornix (triumphal arch) and a temple dedicated to Luventa (goddess of youth) were also present. Two special loggias are provided:

one for the Emperor and the other for the patron of the games.

The elongated Circus is 600 meters long and 150 meters wide, with an estimated capacity of 100,000 spectators.

Augustus erects the first obelisk on the spina, dedicated to the sun god Sol. This obelisk, dating from the reign of Ramses II, now stands in the Piazza del Popolo. In the early 4th century, Emperor Constantine I restored the circus and prepared a site on the spina for a new obelisk, which arrived in Rome in 323.



THE BATTLE OF ADUATUCA

The Battle of Aduatuca took place in autumn 54 BC, most probably in the Geer valley between Tongeren and Liège. The battle was part of Julius Caesar's Gallic War to conquer the Celtic territories west of the Rhine.

Caesar's strategy for conquering this vast area with few legionnaires was to successively defeat the Gallic peoples. He particularly feared the Belgians, who had been able to halt the invasions of other peoples, including the terrible Cimbres.

This battle was one of the few Gallic victories against the Romans. Ambiorix, King of the Eburons, cunningly sets a trap

7,000 legionaries of the XIVth legion commanded by legates Quintus Titurius Sabinus and Lucius Aurunculeius Cotta were killed in the action.

Ambiorix

Ambiorix was a king of the Eburons people in the 1st century BC, renowned for his resistance against Rome. In 54 BC, he ambushed Julius Caesar's legions, inflicting a heavy defeat on the Romans. However, in the face of Caesar's retaliation, his people were wiped out and he disappeared without a trace. Today, Ambiorix is an emblematic figure of Gallic resistance, honored particularly in Belgium, where a statue is dedicated to him in Tongeren.

THE STATUE OF AMBIORIX IN TONGEREN, BELGIUM.



The victory was achieved thanks to the surprise effect of the Belgian attack, when the legionaries were on their way out of camp and had not anticipated an offensive.

This victory provoked further revolts, notably among the Nervians, who besieged Quintus Tullius Cicero, the younger brother of the famous orator Cicero, in his camp. Caesar arrived in time to prevent the camp from being taken, and then led a severe crackdown which, according to his

La Guerre des Gaules, led to the extermination of the Eburon people. However, Ambiorix continued to escape, taking refuge in the deep forests of the Ardennes.

In the 19th century, Ambiorix became an emblematic figure in Belgian history. Statues were dedicated to him, and a park bears his name in Brussels. He has become the equivalent of Vercingetorix in France.

Gaul warrior

The Gaul warrior is a Gallo-Roman limestone statue discovered in 1865 near Vachères, in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence region of France. Dating from the second half of the 1st century BC, it represents a Gallic warrior integrated into the Roman army. The sculpture features details such as chain mail, an oval shield and a Celtic torque, symbolizing the fusion of Gallic and Roman cultures. Today, this work is preserved at the Calvet Museum in Avignon, bearing witness to the Romanization of the Gallic peoples and their integration into the Roman Empire.



AVIGNON - GUERRIER DE VACHERES LAPIDARY MUSEUM

THE GALLO-ROMAN VILLA

After Caesar's military conquest in 51BC, our regions were not yet Roman. It was Augustus, his successor, who took the initiative for peaceful construction.

He encouraged Roman settlers to move into Gallic territories, introducing the Roman language and developing economic structures, notably a road network.

These two actions encouraged the emergence of vast agricultural estates that traded with the rest of the Roman world,

known as Gallo-Roman villas. These properties belonged to Romans or members of the Gallic aristocracy who wished to adopt the Roman way of life.

In Basse-Wavre, between 1904 and 1914, rapid excavations unearthed the remains of the largest villa discovered in Belgium. The villa was around 150 meters long and comprised 52 rooms.

Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar was a Roman general and statesman of the 1st century B.C. Conqueror of Gaul, he consolidated his power before crossing the Rubicon in 49 B.C. to take Rome with his army, triggering a civil war. After becoming dictator for life, he initiated major reforms before being assassinated by senators in 44 BC. His legacy led to the end of the Republic and the birth of the Roman Empire, making him one of the most influential figures in history.



STATUE OF JULIUS CAESAR BY NICOLAS COUSTOU, 1696, MUSÉE DU LOUVRE.

Nine of these rooms were built on hypocausts, providing underfloor heating. The villa was sumptuously decorated, with mosaic paving and marble-clad walls.

It was a villa *rustica* whose management was entrusted to a steward (vilicus) by the owner, the Dominus, while the master of the house resided in the luxurious Pars Urbana.

The villae rusticae, based on the intensive and well-considered use of slave labor, achieved high productivity and were dedicated to speculative crops.

In addition to slaves, these villae *rusticae* also required seasonal labor, which smaller landowners were able to provide. Roman farmers also benefited from Gallic inventions such as the harvester. Pliny the Elder attests to this in his *Naturae Historiae* :

“
In the vast estates of Gaul, a large box lined with teeth and pulled by two wheels is pushed by an ox. The ears torn off by the teeth fall into the box...
”

NAPOLEON & EGYPT

On July 1, 1798, General Bonaparte, who was not yet Emperor, landed in Egypt with 50,000 soldiers and sailors, as well as 167 renowned scientists in fields as diverse as physics, mathematics and architecture. Among them was Belgian Henri-Joseph Redouté, an expert in flora and fauna, as Belgium had been annexed to France since 1794.

Their aim was to draw up an inventory of Egypt, with a view to exploiting its economic resources and establishing revolutionary France on the banks of the Nile.

Like their General, these scientists were passionate about ancient culture, and the expedition offered them the opportunity to explore the remnants of Egyptian culture, which fed many fantasies.



H. REDOUTÉ BY ANDRÉ DUTERTRE, ÉCOLE NATIONALE SUPÉRIEURE DES BEAUX-ARTS

Henri-Joseph Redouté

Henri-Joseph Redouté (1766-1852) was a Belgian draftsman and painter, the younger brother of Pierre-Joseph Redouté. In 1785, he joined his brothers in Paris and specialized in natural history drawing. In 1798, he accompanied Napoleon's Egyptian expedition as a member of the Commission des sciences et des arts, contributing detailed illustrations to the *Description de l'Égypte*.

His work enriched the scientific documentation of the time, leaving a notable artistic legacy.

Some people see in the hieroglyphs the vestiges of the “Adamic language” that Adam and Eve would have used, while others envisage initiation rites taking place inside the pyramids.

It wasn't until 1824 that Champollion succeeded in deciphering hieroglyphics, thanks to the Rosetta Stone discovered by Captain Bouchart.

Scholars played a fundamental role in Egyptology. *La Description de l'Égypte*, published after Bonaparte's return to Europe, remains a benchmark for the study of lost monuments.

In short, although the Egyptian Expedition was a military failure, it was a scientific success!



BATTLE OF THE PYRAMIDS

The Battle of the Pyramids did not take place next to the pyramids, but 20 km from the famous monuments.

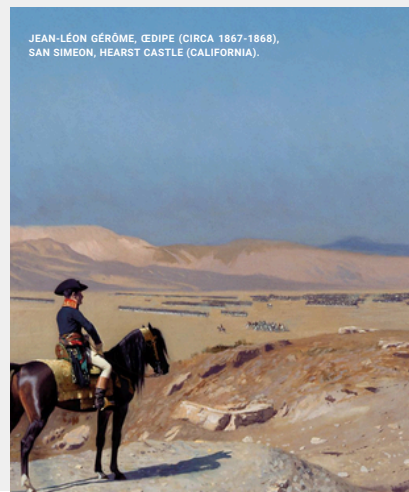
Nevertheless, naming the battle “Pyramids” reinforced General Bonaparte's military glory, elevating him to the rank of the great Greek and Roman conquerors.

The battle took place on July 21, 1798 on the Embabeh plateau, pitting the Mamluks, then rulers of Egypt under the command of the Bey (Lords) Murad and Ibrahim, with 30,000 combatants, against the French army of 20,000 soldiers.

Bonaparte noted that the Mamluk cannons were not mobile, and that the infantrymen would not dare move away from them. Moreover, the latter did not play

not play an important role among the Mamelukes, a cavalier people.

Bonaparte ordered Desaix to move out of range of enemy artillery and attack the Mamelukes, while General Bon prepared for a frontal attack on the Embabeh entrenchments. The Mamluk infantrymen soon suffered heavy losses. Around 3,000 Mamluks managed to escape the French and reach their camp at Embabeh.



JEAN-LÉON GÉRÔME, *ÉDIPÉ* (CIRCA 1867-1868),
SAN SIMEON, HEARST CASTLE (CALIFORNIA).

Mourad Bey sees the French movement and intends to take advantage of the superiority of his cavalry. He ordered his impetuous horsemen to charge the French columns as they approached.

The columns formed into squares, against which the Mameluke charges crashed in vain.

To protect themselves from the horsemen, each division formed a square with six rows of infantrymen. The artillery was positioned at the corners. These squares were mobile to maneuver against the Mamelukes. When loaded, they had to stop and face the enemy from all sides.



When they wanted to take a Mameluk position, the front ranks had to break away to form attack columns, and the others had to stay back, always forming the square and ready to collect the attack columns in case of retreat.

Wellington used this strategy at Waterloo against the French cavalry.

This is how Generals Bon and Menou, moving in square formation, managed to take Embabeh and its fortifications by bayonet, eliminating the numerous Mamluks defending these positions.

The battle was over, the Mamluk cavalry decimated and the Beys forced to flee. Bonaparte could then march on Cairo and take political control of Egypt.

The French lose 30 men, while the Mamelukes lose 10,000.

POMPEII

Pompeii was destroyed in 79 by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, along with Herculaneum, Oplontis and Stabies.

Buried under several meters of volcanic ash sediment, it remained protected for centuries, offering a glimpse of a Roman city frozen in time. The dried ash makes excavation difficult, which has enabled the city to escape looting and requires considerable resources to excavate.

Pompeii fell into oblivion until its rediscovery in the 17th century. From 1748 onwards, excavations began, unearthing numerous archaeological finds that were to have a significant impact on Western fashion, notably from the Louis XVI style onwards.

Karl Weber and Francesco La Vega took it upon themselves to prevent uncontrolled excavation of the site, while at the same time enabling the reconstruction of elements of the upper structures of the buildings, in order to preserve the decoration of the walls and mosaics. The study of wall paintings has made it possible to distinguish four painting styles, succeeding one another over time, known as “Pompeian styles”.

At this time, the finds were brought together in the Royal Museum of Portici to guarantee their safety. This museum creates an astonishing contrast, as Charles Dupaty points out:

“*We love to see a grain of wheat triumph over time, just like the bronze statue, and share eternity with it.*”

In 1799, French forces seized Naples and the republican Neapolitans proclaimed the Parthenopean Republic. General Championnet supported the excavations, which he entrusted to Abbé Zarilli.

In 1803, Joséphine received several crates full of Pompeii artefacts from the King of the Two Sicilies, Ferdinand IV, at Malmaison.

In 1808, Marshal Murat, Napoleon's brother-in-law thanks to his marriage to his sister Caroline, was proclaimed King of Naples by Napoleon.

He encouraged the development of excavations by acquiring new land.

During his reign, the architect François Mazois published the first two volumes of his work, *The Ruins of Pompeii*.

During this period, supervision of the excavations was entrusted to two skilled and dedicated men, Michele Arditi and Pietro La Vega.

Any survivors in Pompei

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D. buried Pompeii in ash, killing around 15,000 people. Some inhabitants managed to escape, bearing witness to the catastrophe throughout the Roman Empire.

Since then, the city has never been re-inhabited, becoming a major archaeological site. Today, Pompeii welcomes over 4 million visitors a year, with a limit of 20,000 a day to preserve the site.



THE NAVAL BATTLE OF ABOUKIR

While the Battle of the Pyramids was one of General Bonaparte's finest feats of arms, the Egyptian campaign began to turn against him just one month after his landing. On August 1 and 2, 1798, the French fleet was soundly defeated in the naval battle of Aboukir.

Great Britain, at war with France since 1793, was the master of the seas and sought to prevent the French from gaining a foothold in Egypt, from where they could threaten British settlements in India, where Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, had made his name.

The Admiralty sent Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson to intercept the French before they reached Egypt, but Nelson failed in his mission, overestimating the speed of the French ships.

However, he finally managed to locate the French fleet, cautiously anchored close to the coast in Aboukir roadstead. Nelson chose to launch the assault as night fell, which caught the French completely off guard.

The French squadron was commanded by Vice-Admiral François Paul de Brueys d'Aigalliers, who had connected his ships with thick cables to prevent them from breaking the line, and with the idea of forming a line of cannons. However, his ships are embossed too far from the shoals and too far from the fort for him to protect them.

His ships were too far apart to support each other. This position means that all possible maneuvering is abandoned, and does not take into account a space through which British ships would find it difficult to penetrate.

In addition, three of its ships, such as the “Conquérant”, dating from 1747, are obsolete.

At around 6:20 p.m. on August 1, the attack begins. In a twist of fate that turned into an opportunity, HMS Goliath, under the command of Captain Foley, passed in front of the bow of the “Guerrier” and rounded the entire French line.

It was followed by HMS *Zealous*, HMS *Audacious*, HMS *Orion* and HMS *Theseus*, enabling the British to move up the French line, which they were about to take in their stride. One by one, the French ships were either destroyed or forced to surrender. The battle reached its climax with the explosion of the 120-gun flagship “Orient”.

Rear Admiral Denis Decrès, who could have intervened, remained motionless, condemning what remained of the French squadron, and chose to flee. Decrès bears a heavy responsibility for the French defeat.

Rear Admiral Villeneuve (later defeated at Trafalgar), commanding the rearguard on the 80-gun “William Tell”, did not intervene, scrupulously adhering to his orders not to break the line.

He could have changed the course of the battle by moving up the bay and, in turn, pinching the British line. The next day, Villeneuve escaped with 2 ships and 2 frigates commanded by Decrès. They were not pursued, as Nelson's ships were too badly damaged.

In just a few hours, thanks to luck, daring and tactical genius, Vice-Admiral Nelson changed the course of the Egyptian campaign. Bonaparte no longer received supplies from France and became a prisoner of his conquest. He had to leave his army in August 1799. The Egyptian army finally surrendered at Alexandria in August 1801.

NAPOLEON EMPEROR AND KING

In 1801, the First Consul Bonaparte (a “Roman-style” title he adopted in 1799) designated the port of Boulogne-sur-Mer as the central command point for the army planned to invade Great Britain. Julius Caesar is also said to have established his army and fleet here in 54 BC.

He entrusted command of the flotilla destined to sail to England to Admiral Latouche-Tréville, followed by Bruix in 1803. These two admirals successfully repelled the attacks of the *Royal Navy*, including that of Nelson, who suffered one of the few defeats of his career at Boulogne.

The First Consul ordered major improvements, including the construction of a flushing sluice to clear the river Liane, and the digging of a vast basin capable of accommodating 1,000 boats.

The first Legions of Honor were awarded at the Boulogne camp in 1804. The town council had embellished the town with decorations inspired by Antiquity, depicting the movements of the army.

GRAND COLLIER DE L'ORDRE DE LA LÉGIION D'HONNEUR AVANT APPARTENU À
NAPOLÉON IER. BY MARTIN-GUILLAUME BIENNAIS. © PARIS - MUSÉE DE
L'ARMÉE, DIST. RMN-GRAND PALAIS / IMAGE MUSÉE DE L'ARMÉE



*L*egion of honor

The Legion of Honor is France's highest honor, created by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802. Rewarding civil and military merit, it is awarded without distinction of origin or social rank. Comprising several grades, it is awarded to those who have made outstanding contributions to France. Today, it remains a symbol of prestige and excellence, awarded to personalities from all over the world for their outstanding achievements.

In the center stood a mound on which rested an antique throne, known as "Dagobert's throne" (King of the Franks from 629 to 639).

The site chosen for the ceremony was the natural circus of Therlinctum, laid out like a Roman amphitheatre. In the center was a mound on which rested an antique throne, known as the "throne of Dagobert" (King of the Franks from 629 to 639). With this staging, Napoleon sought to link his new dynasty to the first dynasty to rule the kingdom of France, that of the Merovingians.

The Emperor stands beside his brother Joseph, surrounded by ministers, marshals and a large retinue. Napoleon wears the small uniform of the chasseurs à cheval, complemented by his already emblematic hat. Marshal Berthier gestures to the 120,000 men to present their arms. Napoleon begins to read the legionnaires' oath:

“
to devote yourselves to the service of the Empire and to the preservation of its territory in its integrity, to the defense of the Emperor, of the laws of the Republic and of the properties which they have consecrated, to fight by all the means which justice, reason and the laws authorize, any enterprise which would tend to re-establish the feudal regime. You swear to contribute with all your power to the maintenance of liberty and equality, the primary foundations of our constitutions.”

Napoleon added: "You swear it", to which 120,000 men responded with a single "we swear it".

There were almost 2,000 recipients, including 16 Grand Officers, 49 Commanders and 189 Officers. Very few civilians received the Légion d'Honneur, which remained mainly a military award.

Once the distribution was complete, the parade of troops began. Leading the way were the sailors from the flotilla, their boarding axes slung over their shoulders.

Today, the Grande Armée column in Boulogne is a reminder of this event.

THE CORONATION

On his return from Egypt, Napoleon seized power in a coup d'état on 18 Brumaire An VIII (November 9, 1799). He became First Consul of a triumvirate (power shared by 3 people) alongside two other Consuls: Cambacérès, a deputy and jurist, and Lebrun, elected to the Council of Ancients and an economist.

The term comes directly from the two triumvirates of Roman history. The first brought together Caesar, Pompey and Crassus in 60 BC and again in 57 BC, while the second brought together Octavian, Mark Antony and Lepidus in 43 BC, culminating in the battle of Actium.

The Consulate saw the implementation of the major achievements of the First Empire, such as the Civil Code, the restoration of domestic peace, the Concordat with

the Church (still the benchmark in Belgium), the creation of the Banque de France and the creation of the Banque de France. France, the Cour des Comptes and the stabilization of the currency thanks to the Germinal franc, which remained convertible into gold until 1914. The Consulate also saw major military successes, such as the Battle of Marengo against the Austrians on June 14, 1800, and a brief peace with Great Britain between 1803 and 1804.

This led Napoleon and his entourage to seek to stabilize the regime by establishing a republican monarchy. This concept is directly borrowed from Roman history and its "Emperors of the Republic".

In practical terms, all republican institutions remain in place, but under the leadership of a monarch. So it's not a return to the old Bourbon regime.

Napoleon became Emperor of the French following a sénatus-consulte (Senate text, a term also borrowed from the Roman Senate) of May 18, 1804, establishing the Empire.

The people were asked to vote on the issue in June 1804, with a landslide victory for the “yes” vote (99.93%). However, the vote was not secret, and voters were subject to pressure.

Napoleon I wanted to organize a coronation ceremony to place the Napoleonic dynasty among the great imperial and royal dynasties of France and Europe.

He chose not to celebrate this event in Reims, which was too reminiscent of the Capetian, Valois and Bourbon (ancient French dynasties), preferring Paris.

His inspiration also came from the Carolingian Emperor Charlemagne, who had been crowned by the Pope on December 25, 800.

The Emperor set the coronation for December 2, 1804 at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, in the presence of Pope Pius VII. The interior of the Gothic cathedral is barely recognizable, as the medieval style was rejected at the time. As a result, the interior was adorned to give it a neo-classical, i.e. Romanesque, appearance.



THE RITE OF NAPOLEON BY JACQUES-LOUIS DAVID
(1808, MUSÉE DU LOUVRE).

POST-WATERLOO

The Battle of Waterloo on June 18, 1815, sealed the fate of Napoleon I's Empire, which collapsed with the Emperor's second abdication in Paris on June 22.

The ex-Emperor tried to escape the victorious powers and headed for Rochefort, where he hoped to find a ship bound for the United States. The port was under British blockade, preventing Napoleon from leaving.

Various means were proposed to him, such as forcing his way out of the two French frigates at anchor, via an American ship, hidden in a wine cask, on a tide chaser... Napoleon left for the island of Aix, where he eventually surrendered to the Royal Navy on July 15, 1815.

The British government wished to prevent Napoleon from landing on a crown land where he might

use habeas corpus and be tried under British law. For this reason, Napoleon was transferred from HMS Bellerophon to HMS Northumberland without ever setting foot on land, and then sent to the island of St. Helena.

This island does not belong to the United Kingdom, as it is privately owned by the East India Company, which leases the land to the British government. This legal stratagem avoids a complex court case.

The island, which lies 1,900 km off the coast of Africa in the middle of the South Atlantic, is protected like a fortress by 1,500 soldiers. In addition, several ships and 500 cannons guarded the island's approaches, to ensure that the "troublemaker of the world" would not return to haunt European courts.

Napoleon was the best-kept prisoner in history.

Napoleon was housed at Longwood House from December 10. In this damp, rat-infested residence, he shared his memories with the Comte de Las Cases, who would later record them in the "Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène". He also took up gardening and imposed imperial etiquette (courtly manners) on the small retinue accompanying him during his exile.

He also had a daughter with Albine de Montholon,

named Marie Caroline Julie Elisabeth Joséphine Napoléone de Montholon, who died young in Brussels in 1819. Her tomb is in the Brussels cemetery.

On May 5, 1821, the former Emperor died of a stomach ulcer that had developed into cancer. His suffering, described in the Memorial and reported by witnesses, made him a kind of martyr to the French Revolution. Napoleon won the battle of memory.

The Romantics drew on ancient mythology, comparing him to Prometheus chained to his rock.



NAPOLEON'S DEATH, AT LONGWOOD HOUSE, ON THE ISLAND OF ST. HELENA.

POP CULTURE

Since the end of Antiquity, which we can date from the fall of Rome in 476, Greco-Roman culture has been the stuff of dreams for many people.

In the Middle Ages, sovereigns such as Emperor Charlemagne and King Philippe Auguste of France drew inspiration from the Romans.

The Renaissance saw the full cultural rediscovery of Antiquity through painting, architecture and sculpture. This fashion for antiquity continued through the ages, with varying degrees of intensity, culminating in the Napoleonic era.

Antiquity continues to live on today through multiple channels that feed an antique dream.



The films, through the peplums, give a spectacular image of Antiquity with Julius Caesar (1953), Ben-Hur (1959) Cleopatra (1963), the fall of the Roman Empire (1964) or more recently Gladiator (2000), Troy (2004) and 300 (2007).

With their humorous tone, the Adventures of Asterix, brought to the screen since 1999 with Asterix and Obelix vs. Caesar, have become an integral part of our contemporary culture, with Asterix & Obelix - Mission Cleopatra (2002) remaining the most popular.

Les Aventures d'Astérix le Gaulois, created in 1959 by Goscinny and Uderzo, is part of the diffusion of a certain vision of Antiquity through the tribulations of a village of diehard Gauls who resist the Roman invaders.

The 40-volume series has been translated into 117 languages and has sold almost 400 million copies.



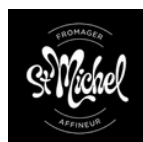
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