



Smithsonian Associates

The Secrets of Père Lachaise Cemetery

Madeline Díaz

Friday, December 13, 2024 - 12:00 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. ET

Further Reading

The Secret Life of a Cemetery by Benoît Gallot. Éditions Les Arènes, 2022.

City of Immortals: Père Lachaise Cemetery, Paris. By Campbell, Carolyn. Geoff Books, 2019.

The Architecture of Death: The Transformation of the Cemetery in 18th Century Paris. By Richard Etlin, MIT Press

A Guide to the Art in Paris Cemeteries: Père Lachaise Cemetery. By Steve Soper and Marie Beleyme (old 3rd printing)

Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography. By Douglas Keister (Gibbs Smith Publisher)

Beyond Grief: Sculpture and Wonder in the Gilded Age By Cynthia Mills (Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press)

The Secret vibrant life of Paris famed Pere Lachaise Cemetery

<https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20221211-the-secret-vibrant-life-of-paris-famed-père-lachaise-cemetery>

THE PERE LACHAISE CEMETERY AT A GLANCE

- Established by Napoleon in 1804 - "Every citizen has the right to be buried regardless of race or religion".
- Laid out by architect Alexandre-Théodore Brongniart in less than six months
- Named after Père François de la Chaise (1624–1709), who was the confessor to Louis XIV
- Biggest museum in Paris (110 acres)
- Most visited non-secular cemetery in the world
- Address: 16 rue du Repos, 75020 Paris (16 street of rest)
- Resting place of many multiple luminaries in literature, painting, music, theatre, politics, science, etc, including Jim Morrison, Edith Piaf, Chopin, Molière, Marcel Proust, Oscar Wilde, Colette, Honoré de Balzac, Gertrude Stein, Camille Pissarro, Amedeo Modigliani, Eugène Delacroix, Georges Seurat, Max Ernst, Sarah Bernhardt, Maria Callas, Isadora Duncan...
- Patrons often paired architects with sculptors when commissioning a tomb making the cemetery a gallery of the leading examples of both art and architecture of the nineteenth century
- The transfer of the remains of luminaries like Jean de La Fontaine and Molière served as a marketing campaign

- 1817 the remains of Pierre Abélard and Héloïse d'Argenteuil were transferred to the cemetery with their monument's canopy made from fragments of the abbey of Nogent-sur-Seine
- Around 30,000 tombs, built before 1900, are classified historic monuments
- It has been expanded five times: in 1824, 1829, 1832, 1842 and 1850
- Over 70,000 tombs in total
- One million people buried in Père Lachaise - resting place for all people, representing many economic strata, races, and religions.
- Plots are still being sold - for ten, 30 or 50 years, or in perpetuity
- Ran by an appointed curator and director (currently Benoît Gallot) whose office and residence is in the cemetery

MAP OF PÈRE LACHAISE CEMETERY FEATURING THE TOMBS OF LUMINARIES IN PAINTING, MUSIC, LITERATURE AND SCIENCE

