Château de Fontainebleau

Press release

Fontainebleau, 16th june 2026

Exhibition

« *Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI at Fontainebleau: Splendor and the Sweetness of Life*»

From 11th october 2026 to 25th january 2027
In partnership with the Grand Palais Rmn

An exceptional return, 240 years after the royal couple's last stay.



The Silver Boudoir, designed for Marie-Antoinette in 1786 under the direction of architect Pierre Rousseau (1751–1829), features furnishings in gilt bronze and mother-of-pearl, notably crafted by cabinetmaker Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806).

In autumn 2026, the Château de Fontainebleau will devote a major exhibition to Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI, 240 years after their last stay at this iconic residence, which has stood as a witness to French history for more than 900 years. Organized in partnership with the GrandPalaisRmn, this unprecedented exhibition explores the royal couple's deep attachment to Fontainebleau, where they stayed on eleven occasions between 1770 and 1786.

More intimate than Versailles, Fontainebleau emerged as a favored residence where a refined art of living flourished, blending pleasure, courtly display, political power, and family life. It also served as an active political stage, where Louis XVI held council and asserted his authority, while the Queen fully expressed her taste for the arts and modernity. The remarkable interiors that survive today—including the Turkish Boudoir, the Silver Boudoir, the Queen's Grand Cabinet, the King's Powdering Cabinet, the Buffet Room, and the Chapel of the Trinity—created under the direction of architects Richard Mique, Nicolas-Marie Potain, and Pierre Rousseau, still bear witness within the château to this exceptional moment of grace..

An immersion in the art of living on the eve of the French Revolution.

Bringing together more than 120 exceptional works (paintings, sculptures, decorative arts, textiles, and drawings) from prestigious French institutions such as the Musée du Louvre and the Bibliothèque nationale

de France, as well as international collections including the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon and the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York, the exhibition offers an evocative immersion into court life at the end of the Ancien Régime, particularly through the lens of theatre and music. The exhibition highlights both the artistic and cultural richness of the reign, as well as the profound transformations of a society on the eve of the French Revolution.

A thematic journey

The exhibition itinerary offers a progressive immersion in seven stages into the world of Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI at Fontainebleau, closely connecting the displayed works with the château's still-preserved spaces. Visitors discover the major architectural projects carried out at Fontainebleau in the 1770s and 1780s, notably through architectural drawings by Pierre Rousseau and refined furniture by Jean-Henri Riesener, reflecting both the art of governing and the art of living.

The following sections highlight first the figure of the King, then that of the Queen, through their tastes, commissions, and respective spaces: intimate cabinets, redesigned apartments, and refined interiors. The itinerary then extends to spaces of sociability and court life, illustrating the splendour of 18th-century high society, before turning to the family sphere and emblematic practices such as hunting.

In the background, the exhibition reveals the tensions of a pivotal era, ultimately evoking, in its final section, the revolutionary rupture that brought this art of living to an end.

Emblematic masterpieces



Bust of Marie-Antoinette, Félix Lecomte (1737–1817), sculpture, 1783 Collection: Château de Versailles © GrandPalaisRmn (Château de Versailles) / Daniel Arnaudet

Among the emblematic works brought together, several masterpieces vividly illustrate the "splendour and sweetness of life" characteristic of the Fontainebleau stays. The bust of Marie-Antoinette sculpted by Félix Lecomte in 1783 offers both an idealised and sensitive image of the sovereign, while the grand portrait of Louis XVI in coronation costume by Duplessis asserts the political and ceremonial dimension of royal power. Decorative arts occupy a central place, notably with the sumptuous commode delivered in 1778 by cabinetmaker Jean-Henri Riesener for the King's private retreat, as well as the precious textiles intended for the Queen's apartments. Monumental painting is also represented by Hubert Robert's *The Pont du Gard*, designed for the King's dining room, reflecting a taste for landscapes and Antiquity.

These major works are complemented by Sèvres porcelain, furniture, architectural drawings, and pieces linked to performance and music, forming an exceptional ensemble that captures the full artistic and cultural richness of the court on the eve of the French Revolution.

An invitation to take a new look at the Château de Fontainebleau

By bringing into dialogue the artworks, the preserved interiors—such as the intimate Turkish Boudoir, the sumptuous Silver Boudoir, and the royal cabinets—and recent scholarly research, the exhibition offers a fresh reading of the château. It reveals a place that is both intimate and political, where the final expressions of an aristocratic art of living crystallised, soon to be disrupted by the French Revolution.

An exhibition within an exceptional season

This exhibition is part of a broader programme dedicated to Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI at the Château de Fontainebleau in 2026. Exhibitions, concerts, guided tours, and festive events extend the experience and bring to life the vibrancy of 18th-century court life.

True to its mission, the château offers a renewed perspective on its history, inviting visitors to rediscover its spaces through the lens of one of the last great moments of the Ancien Régime.

Alongside the opening of the exhibition, a film series dedicated to Marie-Antoinette will be presented at the Fontainebleau town cinema, as well as a weekend of conferences on 28 November.

PRATICALS INFORMATIONS

The exhibition is freely accessible upon presentation of a château admission ticket.

The château is open every day except Tuesday, from 9:30 am to 6:00 pm.

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Palace and Park of Fontainebleau
Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981

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