The vestibule was designed by Monet to create a space between the hustle and bustle of the city and his works. By donating the Water Lilies to France, after the First World War, Monet was offering Parisians a haven of peace, inviting them to contemplate an image of nature evoking infinity. In 1909, when first considering this project, he wrote: “Nerves strained by work would relax in its presence, following the restful example of its stagnant waters, and for he who would live in it, this room would offer a refuge for peaceful meditation in the midst of a flowering aquarium.”

A true testament to Monet’s artistic talent, these Grandes Décorations are the culmination of a lifetime’s work. He continued to work on them from 1914 until his death in 1926, taking inspiration from his “water garden” at Giverny. From 1886, Monet had focused on capturing the changing qualities of natural light in his garden. The eight panels presented in these two rooms evoke the passing of the hours from sunrise in the east to sunset in the west. With no horizon to orient the viewer, the elements – water, air, sky, earth – seem to merge in a composition without perspective where the flowers create a rhythm. Monet thus conveys “the illusion of an endless whole, of water without horizon and without shore”.

The Water Lilies were presented to the public in 1927, a few months after the artist’s death, the critics at that time being much more interested in the innovations of the avant-garde. After the Second World War, influenced by the proponents of lyrical abstraction, who detected in the Water Lilies the origins of abstract art, interest in his work revived, bringing increasing numbers of visitors to the Orangerie.

Information and Services

www.musee-orangerie.fr

Rooms cleared at 5.45 pm

Groups prior booking obligatory

Audioguide

Family’s version

Bookshop-Boutique

9 am - 5.45 pm

Café

9.30 am - 5.30 pm

Auditorium

9 am - 5.45 pm

Activities

Workshops for adults and children, tours, stories

Reduced mobility

Wheelchairs, walking sticks, pushchairs and baby carriers available

Magnetic loop

Site with several points

To level -1

Bookshop-Boutique

Café

The Jean Walter & Paul Guillaume Collection

Ticket desk

Audioguide

Lift

Cloakroom

Information

To level -2

Museum entrance/exit
Jean Walter & Paul Guillaume Collection

Born into a modest family, Paul Guillaume started his working life in a garage. In 1911, he displayed some African statuettes in the window of the garage and thus attracted the attention of the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, who became his mentor.

Within a year he opened his first gallery and began a new career as an art dealer and collector. Paul Guillaume quickly became a respected figure in the artistic and literary circles of the 1920s. He died in 1934 before fulfilling his ambition to create a museum of modern art. His wife completed and modified his work, and saw herself as both a witness and patron of this illustrious talent.

Paul Guillaume’s relationship with Henri Matisse was always somewhat distant. However, this did not stop him from buying 25 of Matisse’s paintings. Doxamine, Guillaume’s wife, only kept 10 of them, from the period in Nice (1917-1929). Painted after his experimental Fauve period (1905-1908), L’Odalisque à la culotte grise (Doxamine in Grey Trousers) illustrates how Matisse developed a very personal idiom through sophisticated constructions and interplay of colour.

The Modern Primitives:

Paul Guillaume’s collection reflects the temperament of this sophisticated, cultured and enquiring collector. He was open to both modern and traditional works, and was always looking to seek out new talents like Modigliani and Soutine, without neglecting established painters like Renoir and Cézanne, recognising their talent and feeling for innovation.

The Modern Classics:

Paul Guillaume’s collection reflects the temperament of this sophisticated, cultured and enquiring collector. He was open to both modern and traditional works, and was always looking to seek out new talents like Modigliani and Soutine, without neglecting established painters like Renoir and Cézanne, recognising their talent and feeling for innovation.

Turmoil and Bursting Exuberance:

The Orangerie has the largest collection of Chaim Soutine’s paintings in Europe, and the final section in the museum presents the powerful, tormenting works of both Soutine and Maurice Utrillo. These paintings reflect the eclecticism of Paul Guillaume who saw no conflict between the gentle beauty of a Renoir, and the violence of a Soutine. Early in his career as an art dealer, Guillaume supported Maurice Utrillo, the son of Suzanne Valadon. Views of Paris and Montmartre were the preferred subjects of this tortured, solitary painter.