



An imposing landscape. Richard Nixon, ex president of USA said, "Why have I been taken to Versailles seven times and never brought here?"

Among the many shows and exhibits the Museum has put on over the years, a few stand out: Polo Tango, a recreation of the arrival of the horse in South America and its impact on the different cultures; The Horse, the Dream and poetry, a popular voyage through the past centuries, and one dedicated to Christmas and children.

#### HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL STABLES

Legend has it that Louis-Henri de Bourbon, VII Prince of Condé, believed in reincarnation and had his hope pinned on coming back to life as a horse. Therefore, in 1719, he instructed the architect Jean Aubert to build stables befitting his rank, so he would have a dignified place to house him in the next life. Aubert created a true temple to the glory of the horse and hunting: The Grand Stables. This exceptional monument, a landmark of XVIII Century French architecture, was built to house 240 horses and 500 dogs. During the Revolution, the stables, like the Château, were destined for demolition, but the occupying Army miraculously saved them. The revolutionaries did, unfortunately, melt all the lead sculptures of horses, dogs and deer that decorated the buildings and the courtyards of the palace; and in 1792, a troop of national guardsmen raided Chantilly and destroyed La Renommée, a statue that crowned the dome. For two centuries the stables remained decapitated. The Restoration later brought the Princes of Condé back to their land. In 1834, the Grand Stables served as a backdrop for the first horse races in Chantilly, and towards the end of the Century, the Duke of Aumale bequeathed the land to the French Institute. Finally, in 1982, the Institute granted Yves Bienaimé a concession to create the Museum of the Living Horse. Bienaimé restored the Stables to its former glory, and during the festivals that celebrated the bicentennial of the Revolution, he was able to replace the statue of the Renommée and offer it to the Chantilly Domain.

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would not survive more than one year. Now, over 20 years later, the rooms continue to multiply, as do the paintings, the horses, the exhibits, and so far 3 million visitors have graced the halls of the château. Upon arriving for the first time, former U.S. president Richard Nixon exclaimed: "Why have I been taken to Versailles seven times, and not once here?"

The Museum boasts 31 horses, 31 rooms, and three to five educational presentations per day, averaging 20,000 over its 20-year history. The educational presentation is the pièce de résistance of the living museum. Every day, at regular hours, instructors in their red riding tunics explain the basis of equestrian art to the public at large: how a horse moves forwards and backwards, how he learns, how he pays attention, how the rider may benefit from his most outstanding feature - his memory - or suffer from his worst fault: his greed! Laughter and questions always abound after each presentation.

The Grand Stables comprise two naves that stretch on either side of an imposing dome. Despite their grand dimensions, they impart an impression of balance and perfect harmony. At the entrance, the visitor is struck with an incredible interior view of a gallery.

This is what a typical visit to the

museum can look like: after being welcomed by the organisers, guests stroll around the 21 rooms which circle the Cours des Remises, taking in the splendour of the horses and the different exhibits. Then they will move towards the dome and gather under the stunning baroque-style water fountain, where they will generally be served an aperitif. In fine weather, the aperitif is sometimes served in the Cours des Chenils or the Cours des Remises. Then, guests will take their places (up to 620 seats) under the dome to watch the show, before dinner is served in the west nave (gallery of equestrian disciplines). Bienaimé also offers personalised catering, giving guests the chance to reserve formal dinners, cocktail parties and special shows in advance.

THE LIVING horse museum

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# THE LIVING horse museum

When it was born over, 20 years ago, nobody thought it would last long. But the Living Horse Museum in Chantilly not only grew and prospered, but also became a mecca for horse lovers and art enthusiasts worldwide. Here, we tell you why.

The name does not begin to describe it. The Living Horse Museum in Chantilly, 25 miles from Paris, built in the XVIIIth Century, is not only a paradise for horse lovers but also for anyone with an appreciation of art, architecture and even nature. Housed in the magnificent Grand Stables surrounded by luscious, manicured gardens, the Horse Museum is a shrine to all things equestrian. Open all year round and receiving 500 visitors a day and hosting as many as

120 shows and 1,200 educational presentations a year, it is only fair for the Museum to be located in Chantilly, since the charming French city has come to be known as "the world's horse capital".

Yves Bienaimé founded the Museum 21 years ago, in a talented move to revive the aristocratic pedigree of the exceptional Grand Stables. It was not a simple

A paradise for horse lovers. The Living Horse Museum is located at the royal stables, constructed in the 18th Century, surrounded by luxurious and elegant gardens.

move. At the time, the Grand Stables accommodated a riding club, which did not draw enough people or activity to maintain the majestic building, and it was slowly falling apart. The walls were soiled, disfigured, smothered with tar; the masterpiece was wounded. At the age of 25, Bienaimé was the youngest riding master of the day. He began his equestrian career at that riding school, and was struck by both the beauty and the neglect of the magnificent property. He promised to

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