

The Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Paris, is a Roman Catholic Church and minor basilica in Paris, France, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Basilica is located at the summit of the butte Montmartre, the highest point in the city. It is a popular landmark, and the second-most visited monument in Paris. Construction began in 1875 and was completed in 1914. The basilica was consecrated after the end of World War I in 1919. It is 279 feet in length, 115 feet wide and 272 feet tall. It is considered as both a political and cultural monument, representing a national penance for the defeat of France in the 1870 Franco-Prussian War and for the actions of the socialist Paris Commune of 1871. Sacré-Cœur Basilica was built in a neighborhood which witnessed significant events by the Paris Commune of 1871. A law of public utility was passed to seize land at the summit of Montmartre for the construction of the basilica. Architect Paul Abadie designed the basilica after winning a competition over 77 other architects.

With delays in assembling the property, the foundation stone was finally laid on June 16, 1875. Passionate debates concerning the basilica were raised in the *Conseil Municipal* in 1880, where the basilica was called "an incessant provocation to civil war" and it was debated whether to rescind the law of 1873 granting property rights, an impracticable proposition. The matter reached the Chamber of Deputies in the summer of 1882, in which the basilica was defended by Archbishop Guibert while Georges Clemenceau argued that it sought to stigmatize the Revolution. The law was rescinded but, the basilica was saved by a technicality, and the bill was not reintroduced in the next session. A further attempt to halt the construction was defeated in 1897, by which time the interior was substantially complete and had been open for services for six years. The overall style of the structure shows a free interpretation of Romano-Byzantine features, an unusual architectural vocabulary at the time, which was a conscious reaction against the neo-Baroque excesses of the Palais Garnier cited in the competition. Many design elements of the basilica symbolize nationalist themes: the portico, with its three arches, is adorned by two equestrian statues of French national saints Joan of Arc (1927) and King Saint Louis IX, both executed in bronze and the nineteen-ton *Savoyarde* bell (one of the world's heaviest), cast in 1895.

Sacré-Cœur is built of travertine stone quarried in France. The mosaic in the apse, entitled *Christ in Majesty*, was dedicated in 1923, the artwork measures 475 square meters, and is one of the largest mosaics in the world. It portrays the risen Christ in white robes, arms extended, displaying a golden heart. At the base of the mosaic is a Latin inscription, stating that the Basilica is a gift from France. "To the Sacred Heart of Jesus, France fervent, penitent and grateful." The word, grateful, was added after World War I. The basilica complex includes a garden for meditation, with a fountain. The top of the dome is open to tourists and affords a spectacular panoramic view of the city of Paris, which is mostly to the south of the basilica. The use of cameras and video recorders is forbidden inside the basilica. In response to requests from French bishops, Pope Pius IX promulgated the feast of the Sacred Heart in 1856. The basilica itself was consecrated on October 16, 1919. Since 1885 (before construction had been completed) the Blessed Sacrament (Christ's body, consecrated during the Mass) has been continually on display in a monstrance above the high altar. Perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament has continued uninterrupted in the basilica since 1885. Tourists and others are asked to dress appropriately when visiting the basilica and to observe silence as much as possible, so as not to disturb persons who have come from around the world to pray in this place of pilgrimage, especially since the Blessed Sacrament is displayed.

