

  **Eiffel Tower** (Paris, France)

*Spectacular symbol of Paris and all things French*



*"We protest with all our vigour and indignation against the useless and monstrous Eiffel Tower."*

Public letter to a director of the 1889 World Fair

- ❑ Gustave Eiffel was an engineer rather than an architect, best known for his bridges and viaducts.
- ❑ Eiffel's innovative use of metal arches and trusses sparked a revolution in civil engineering and design.

Designed by the man responsible for the framework of that other great feat of French engineering, the Statue of Liberty, the Eiffel Tower is one of the most famous structures in the world. Instantly recognizable, the tower is a symbol of both France and Paris, as well as an icon of elegance, simplicity, and modernity. The Banks of the Seine, from the Sully Bridge to the Eiffel Tower, and from the Place de la Concorde to the Grand and Petit Palais, were inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1991.

Gustave Eiffel's tower takes center stage in every national celebration in France and, fittingly, it was conceived in precisely the same spirit. It was originally commissioned as the focal point of the Exposition Universelle (World Fair) of 1889. The organizers wanted something particularly spectacular because this event coincided with the centenary of the French Revolution. The tower was the ideal solution because, at the time, it was the tallest structure in the world.

The sheer modernity of the tower did not meet with everyone's approval. It was derided as "a tragic street-lamp," "a piece of gymnasium apparatus," "a skinny pyramid of iron ladders," and "an odious column of bolted metal," but, overall, its critics were outnumbered by its admirers. Even so, the tower was still scheduled to be removed when its license expired after twenty years. Ironically, it was saved by the fact that the potential demolition costs were deemed too high.

Since then, the tower has undoubtedly paid its way. It has been used as a radio transmitter since 1903 and is, of course, one of the world's most popular tourist attractions; in 2006, for example, it received more than six million visitors. It is the setting for spectacular firework displays. Other attractions include a skating rink and an interactive "labyrinth" on the first floor. **IZ**

