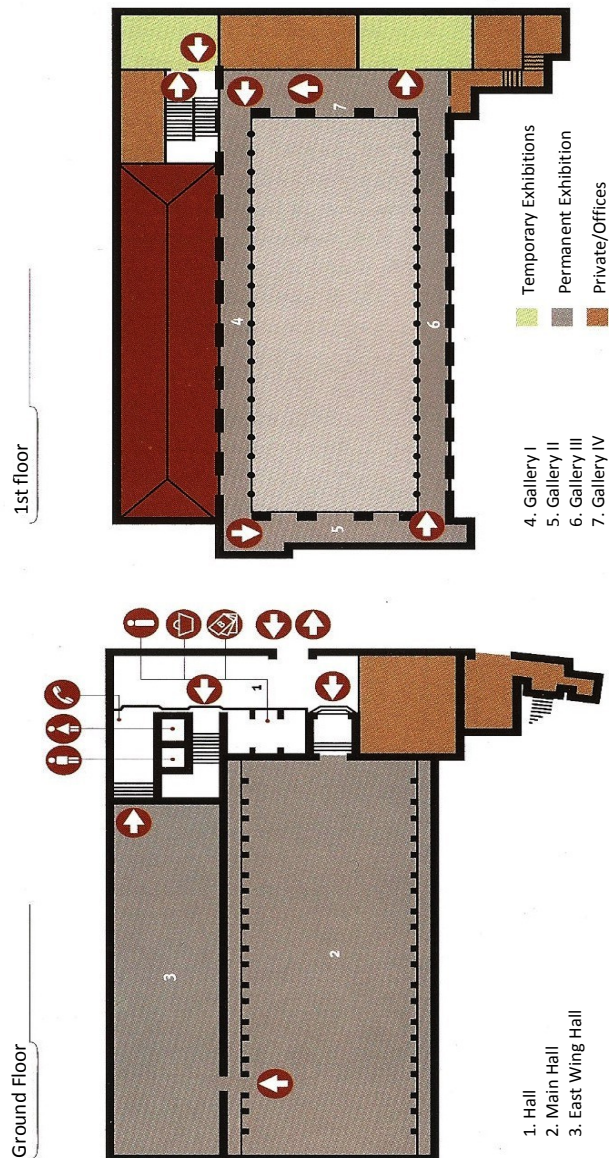




A special word should be said of the three oval-shaped compositions with allegorical scenes, the first one of which depicts a knight, the symbol of Portugal, escorted by four feminine figures – the continents –, that are easy to identify by the animal standing next to each one of them: a horse for Europe, camel for Asia, a crocodile for Africa, and a macaw for America, respectively.

In the second scene, in the centre of the hall, there is a crowned feminine figure that holds the cornucopia of Abundance, a synonym of Peace and Prosperity, with the royal coat of arms of the kingdom of Portugal at her feet. The third scene depicts an allegory to the war, symbolised by a figure with a helmet, lance and shield, riding a chariot drawn by two lions.



Hours

From Tuesday to Sunday, from 10.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. (last entry at 5.30 p.m.).

Closed on Monday, New Year's Day, Easter Sunday, 1 of May and Christmas Day.

Free on Sundays and bank holidays until 2 p.m.



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Museu Nacional dos Coches





The Museum

The National Coach Museum was created by the initiative of Queen Amelia of Orléans and Braganza, daughter of the Counts of Paris, and wife of King Carlos I of Portugal. The place chosen to set up the Museum was the building of the Royal Riding School of the Palace of Belém, that was no longer being used for equestrian activities, but as stores for the Royal House vehicles. The building's adaptation project was entrusted to the architect Rosendo Carvalheira, and the painters José Malhoa and Conceição e Silva worked on the restoration of the ceilings' paintings. On the 23rd May 1905, the Museum of Royal Coaches, as it was called at the time, was inaugurated by the Queen herself. The original collection included only 29 vehicles, Royal House uniforms, harnesses and horsemanship accessories that belonged to the Royal House.



After the establishment of the Republic in 1910, the collection was increased with the addition of vehicles from other Crown stores, from the Lisbon Patriarchate and some noble houses, which prompted the Museum to extend its space hence the construction of a new exhibition hall on the east side, following a project by Raul Lino. In 1984, since it was not possible to further extend the Museum to the west side, an annexe was created in the coach houses and stables of the Ducal Palace of Vila Viçosa, where are exhibited vehicles of the Museum's collection, that were in store, and another set of vehicles from the 19th and 20th centuries that were purchased from the Viscount da Corte and the Count of São Martinho, upon such date.



The collection

The collection of the National Coach Museum is unique in the world, as it exhibits ceremonial and promenade vehicles from the 17th to the 19th century, mostly from the Crown's estate or from the private property of the Portuguese Royal House. It includes coaches, berlins, carriages, chaises, cabriolets, litters, sedan chairs and children's buggies, providing an excellent quality collection that enables visitors to understand the technical and artistic evolution of animal-drawn carriages used by European Courts until the appearance of the motorcar.

A special note should be said about the rare travelling coach which belonged to King Philip II of Portugal (III of Spain), built in Spain in the end of the 16th century, beginning of the 17th century, one of the most ancient coach models ever known.

Particularly important are also the three monumental coaches of the Marquis de Fontes' embassy to Pope Clement XI, built in Rome in 1716. These vehicles are unique in the world and perfect examples of the "carrozza romana" of apparatus, where the open bodies are combined with imposing sculptural compositions on the rear and front parts, allusive to the Portuguese Discoveries and Empire.

Completing the collection there are a group of Cavalry and Team Harnesses, Saddles, Dress Uniforms, Armament and 18th century Processional Accessories. Highlights of this collection are a group of trumpets from the Royal Band, as well as a Portrait Gallery, with pictures of monarchs of the Braganza Dynasty.



The building

Located next to the Tagus River, in the western Lisbon, the National Coach Museum is housed in the former Royal Riding School, a building that was part of the Royal Palace of Belém, today the official residence of the President of the Republic. In 1726, King João V purchased the former Palace of Belém and its respective riding arena from the 3rd Count of Aveiras. In 1786, a Royal Decree ordered the demolition of the riding arena to be replaced by the current structure built according to plans by the Italian architect Giacomo Azzolini, an initiative of Prince João, the future King João VI.



A neoclassical building was constructed with a sober façade designed with eminently horizontal lines, with special emphasis to a projected portico with four doric columns that sustain the balcony running along the entire length of the noble floor. The interiors are composed by a magnificent hall that is 51m long and 17m wide, surrounded by galleries and tribunes with balustrade and colonnade, well according to classic taste. The ceiling, which is decorated with refinement and displays a predominance of equestrian motifs framed by grotesque ornamental details, was worked on and among others, by painters such as Francisco de Setúbal, Joaquim Lopes the Bugre, Francisco de Oliveira and the French artist, Nicolas Delerive.

