



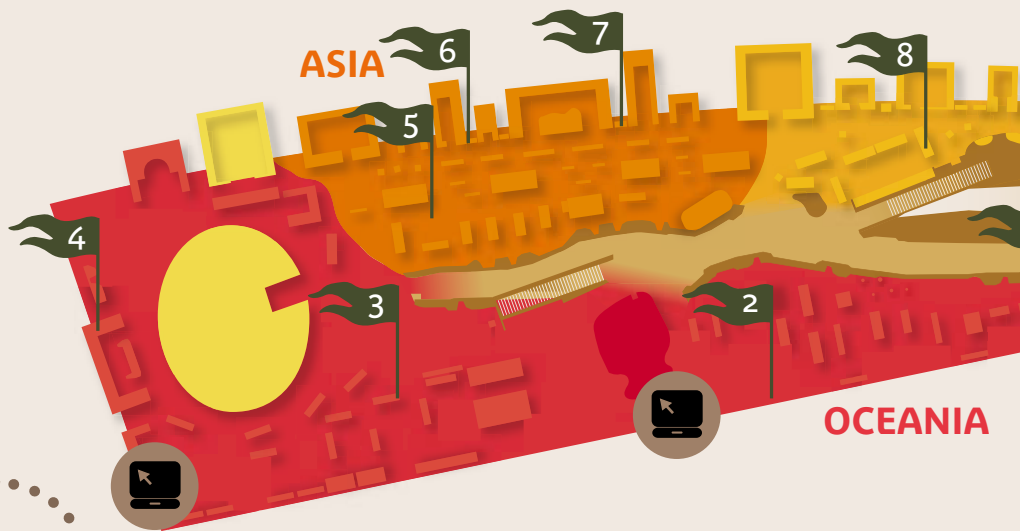
★ musée du quai Branly

WHERE CULTURES MEET IN DIALOGUE



At the heart of the collections ★
*the exhibits
dialogue*

Guide to Exploring the Collections

Welcome to the quai Branly museum. Here, you will discover an original way to visit the permanent collections. A couple of hours should enable you to cover the entire museum and find out how the exhibits dialogue among themselves! Have a nice visit!



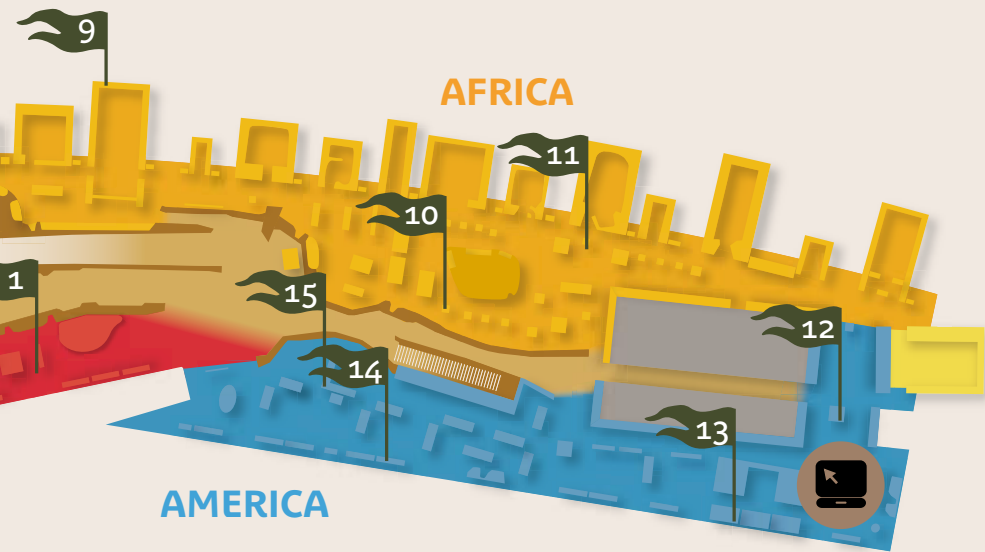
KEY:

-  Location of exhibits
-  Multimedia screens

Once you have gone through ticket control in the entrance hall, **take** the ramp that rises gradually to the area where the collections are exhibited. As you walk up it, discover the Musical Instrument Storeroom. It contains nearly 9,000 instruments.

Can you feel the uneven floor? It was meant to be this way. It feels like a natural path. A contemporary artist was asked to create an auditory and visual presentation that accompanies visitors on their way.

Next, cross the dusky, narrow passageway that is dark like a birth canal. Take a look at the guardrails, which are shaped like the branches of a tree. Everything is designed to transport you to another universe, the world of far-away continents.



..... When you arrive on the collections' plateau, a character with the head of a man and torso of a woman welcomes you to the heart of the museum. Dating from the 10th-11th century, this wood sculpture is known as *Djennenke* and comes from Mali. From Oceania to Asia, then from Africa to America, the geographical trail of the collections features nearly 3,500 pieces. Each change of continent is marked by a modification of the floor colour. The sand-coloured floor indicates transitional area. There are no rooms, no walls, only glass display cases that seem to be scattered in a forest of filtered light. Jean Nouvel, the architect, intended to create this feeling.

Thus, works from four continents mingle to reveal similarities that bring together cultures from around the world. Along the trail, each work refers to the next, like the nursery rhyme where "the farmer takes a wife, the wife takes a child, the child takes a nurse..."

Follow the trail of sentences that take you from exhibit to exhibit all the way through the collections.



1

Follow the red floor to find the first piece from Oceania. On your way, note the orientation table that points to the major exhibits on a map of the continent and of the museum. You will find one at each intersection between two geographical zones.

Coiled around a navel, a double spiral...

Hook from Papua New Guinea,

Sepik River region – Beginning of the 20th century – Wood, plant fibers and natural pigments.

This is the primordial ancestor. She is covered in whirls and spirals that evoke the world of water where the ancestors live. In Papua New Guinea (*north of Australia*), these patterns refer to the custom of scarification (*ritual scars*) and body painting.

A hook? Yes, under the fiber skirt. Suspended from a beam of the house, it was used for hanging domestic objects or food to keep them safe from rodents.

Installed in the Men's house. When the hook was particularly ornated, as it is here, it was used to hang secret objects. In this case, it was destined for the "Men's house," a meeting place for men from the same clan where important decisions were made (hunting, ritual events, etc.). A multimedia screen to the left shows photos of this type of house, which could reach a height of 18m and a length of 40m.



Continue straight ahead. All the surrounding pieces come from Melanesia (*the arc of islands northeast of Australia, from Papua New Guinea to New Caledonia*). The following work is in a glass case placed against the exterior facade, facing a model of a pirogue.

... a double spiral like this money used for exchanges...

Money roll from the Santa Cruz Islands (Solomon Islands archipelago)

Myzomela cardinalis feathers, tortoise shell, bark, vegetable fibers, shells...

Not an easy money to carry around! In Oceania, money is an object of exchange during important events. All the objects in this showcase are currencies from Melanesia. They could seal an alliance between groups, be exchanged for a valuable object like a pirogue or intervene during a marriage transaction.

Where does its value come from? From its length (*around 10m*) and its colour. Around 400 to 600 birds were needed to make it. In this region, red is the symbol of life and power. In Oceania, all types of material can be used for creation: shells, tortoise shell and even bat's teeth, as seen in the money on the right side of the showcase.



2





3

Follow the outside wall, cross the area dedicated to Vanuatu with its large, standing wooden drums, then New Caledonia.

Enter Polynesia with the following exhibit located on the right, behind a globe that shows the great voyages of discovery in Oceania.

Pirogue stern from the Maori population of New Zealand

Early 19th century – Wood, shells.

Maori art is characterised by these scrolls that hide different figures. At the top, there is a fantastic being that is half-man, half-bird. At the base is a figure with a grimacing mouth who sticks out his tongue, a gesture from haka, the traditional dance. This effigy protected the boat. The spirals that cover its body are reminiscent of the art of tattooing, central to Maori culture.

The two objects in the glass with their openwork spirals look similar. However, thousands of kilometers separate New Zealand and Indonesia. These far-distant areas were populated by groups of people with very similar customs and languages.

... for exchanges, and, above all, for war, a pirogue stern covered with intertwined motifs...

Turn left through the Polynesian tapa exhibits (*cloth made from beaten bark*).

Continue straight ahead and go around the musical instrument Storeroom to enter the alcove known as "The Bark Room," which features a wall of Aboriginal paintings.



... intertwined patterns that turn into a snake...

“Rainbow Snake with horns”

by John Mawurndjul

Aboriginal artist (born around 1952) from Arnhem Land in Australia 1991
Eucalyptus bark, natural pigments.

Once you locate the head, the rest of the snake is revealed. For the Aboriginals (*first inhabitants of Australia*), the rainbow appearing at the rainy season is a manifestation of this mythical being, the creator of the world. The snake has the horns of a buffalo, a species introduced during colonization and feared for its strength and violence.

Why is this area called “The Bark Room”? All the works shown here were painted on eucalyptus bark. In the alcove, a film shows you how this material is obtained from trees before flattening it for painting.

Who is John Mawurndjul? An Aboriginal artist. In 2005, he created another painting that covers the entire ceiling of the museum bookshop.

These paintings evoke the *Dreaming*, the Aboriginal spiritual conception of the universe. The abstract patterns always conceal a story. In the midst of the stripes that express the power of the great ancestor-snake, other motifs (*red circles, white heart, etc.*) evoke sacred sites (*roads, water holes, etc.*). The painting becomes a landscape that only Aboriginals know how to interpret.



After the contemporary Aboriginal paintings, **let yourself be guided** by sound to the “Music Boxes”. These boxes are small thematic rooms which overhang the façade. After this musical experience, you enter Asia starting with the orientation table. Behind the large cloth circle shown vertically (it is a so-called “skirt of a hundred pleats” from the Miao in China), stop for a moment in front of the huge bronze drum from Java.

From here, you will see the long wall that crosses the entire museum. Known as “The Snake,” a playful reference to this animal that is feared and venerated throughout the world, the wall contains a multi-sensorial exhibition for all visitors, as well as a place to rest. The next piece is also a snake, ready to pounce on you.

Look up!

5

... a scarecrow snake to frighten you...

Scarecrow from Vietnam,

Kon Tum province, Gie/Jeh population – 1955-1956
Bamboo basketry, ochre, red and black decoration.

Seven-and-a-half meters long, this very light scarecrow in the shape of a snake was hung in the trees and floated above the fields to scare birds away. In Asia, rice is a staple food and is carefully protected, protection which includes the worship of the rice gods and rituals to appease them.

At the center of the snake's body, the star pattern has crossed the centuries, as witnessed by its representation at the center of a drum from Java (4th-1st century B.C.) that is right behind you, as well as on the chest of the other scarecrow with a human form on the side, in the showcase. This pattern probably represents a "vital center" that gives power to the object. **Woven bamboo?** Yes, this material is often used in Vietnam to make everyday objects, such as baskets (*to the right of the snake*). Incidentally, we often speak of "plant civilizations" to define the cultures of Southeast Asia.

Near this scarecrow, textile art is highlighted through a transversal exhibit of glass cases presenting costumes from China to Central Asia, via Southeast Asia.

At the extremity of the scarecrow snake, **turn immediately to the left** left toward a showcase with masks at the far end.

... Frightening? **This wooden mask transmitted oral history...**

Mask from Nepal

19th century – Wood with black patina, goat hair, earth, resin.

"Two eyes, a mouth: after an hour these are the only words I can think of; this is a bad sign for the future of a book about these objects. A book on these objects which leave you speechless – and make you remain silent or cry out, but certainly not ready to discuss art." (Marc Petit, poet and collector of Himalayan tribal masks).

No one really knows what this mask was for. It was undoubtedly part of traditional village festivals or rituals. Perhaps this was a forest spirit. Its patina comes from butter lamps and the deposits of incense smoke. Sheltered behind the mountains, Himalayan civilizations still keep their secrets centred on beliefs that are a mix of shamanism, Buddhism and Hinduism.

This mask serves to illustrate Asia's minorities and contemporary societies. In this sense, the Asia presented at the quai Branly museum is complementary to that of the Louvre and Guimet museums in Paris.

6





Follow the outside wall, characters from Indian shadow-play are in a showcase on the wall.

... oral history told by characters from the touring shadow-play...

Ravana and Sita under a tree, characters from the Tholubommalata shadow-play of India

Andhra Pradesh state – Beginning of the 20th century Goat skin.

Those familiar with the *Ramayana*, a sacred and poetic epic written in India around 2000 years ago, will find it easy to recognize the two main characters of this popular story. Endowed with ten heads representing his immense power, the demon Ravana abducted beautiful Sita, wife of prince Rama.

A live show. The puppeteer animates the figures by manipulating their bamboo sticks behind an illuminated screen. Their shadows, as well as their colours, are projected thanks to translucent animal skins that have been tanned as finely as a parchment. From village to village, the theatrical troupes hold shows that take place outdoors near the temples.

Known as the “Giants of Andhra Pradesh,” the characters of the *Tholubammalata* shadow-play are amongst the largest in Asia. Two other showcases present shadow puppets from China and Syria to highlight the importance of this form of artistic expression born in Asia.

Continue towards the Middle East collections and enter the Maghreb just after the orientation table for Africa. The following piece is on the right, after a white marble funeral stone from Tunisia.



Travel bag of a Tuareg woman

Kel Ahaggar tribe, Hoggar region in the Algerian Sahara
End 19th/beginning 20th century – Leather, silk, plant dyes, embroidery.

Only one decorated side ? Yes, the one that is visible when the bag is hung over the camel's flank and not straddling its back. The bag belonged to a Tuareg woman who used it to keep her valuable clothing, jewellery and tea.

Incisions, pyrography, leather appliqués, silk or cotton embroidery... to embellish leather everyday objects. Women took care of the entire process, from tanning the skins to decorating these objects. Playing on shine, colour, balance and symmetry, they covered these items with geometric patterns which had protective power.

... touring with the desert nomads, this bag is decorated with geometrical patterns...

After the exhibits from North Africa, the journey continues to West Africa. **Cross** the area dedicated to the Dogon population and **take** the passageway that will lead you to a room filled with masks from Burkina Faso (*on the right*) and Mali (*on the left*).

... geometrical patterns on this large mask with faint colours like ocre red...

Mask known as *Sirige* from the Dogon population of Mali

Beginning 20th century – Ceiba wood, pigments.

“The Society of Masks is the whole world. And when it shakes on the public square, it dances to show the way of the world.” (Ogotemmel, Dogon informer, to Marcel Griaule, French ethnologist, in *Dieu d’eau (Water God)*, 1948).

All these objects are masks, including the one that measures 5.2 m and shows a ladder leading to the heavens. Its name means “many-storied house.” Each level corresponds to a stage of knowledge acquired during initiation, a rite that bestows adult status. Initiated men wear these masks during funeral ceremonies. The dancer attaches the lower part to his face and touches the ground with the top of the mask, which becomes animated and takes on life through costume, dance and music.

Paintings that give life to the masks. As they disappear with time, the patterns corresponding to secret symbols are repainted before every ceremony. Red, which evokes blood, is often used, fully covering certain masks and staining nearly all fibres of costumes.

As you leave the box, **go towards** Central Africa and walk in front of the sculpture of a woman from Côte d’Ivoire (*it is a mother and child, note the child she carries on her back*). **Follow** the “Snake” to the next work, red from head to toe.

...red from head to toe, like this mother and child sculpted by a great artist...

Mother and child sculpted by Kwayep Bamileke population, Bangangte chiefdom in Cameroun

Around 1912 – Wood, pigments.

A sculpture by a great artist. Kwayep was a well-known artist attached to the court of a tribal chief; he also sculpted works for neighbouring kingdoms, such as Bangangte, where this piece comes from.

This portrait of a queen was probably done on the request of King N'jiké to celebrate the birth of his first child. A frequent theme in Africa, the mother and child group conveys the importance of fertility. This sculpture also evokes the tenderness that binds the mother to her baby through her gestures and the position of her head. Like the other royal commemorative statues, it was kept in a room known as the *treasure* and exhibited on important occasions.

All red. Her body is covered with wood powder mixed with palm oil. Eminent persons, both men and women, stained their bodies in this way for ritual ceremonies, the crowning of a king or new harvests...

Continue through the exceptional group of works from Cameroon bequeathed by the collector Pierre Harter, including a surprising red sculpture covered with glass beads. To the left, a small monkey from Congo is shown alone in a glass case, in front of the entrance to a box.



... artist and soothsayer,
the nganga communicated
with the spirit world...

Nkisi nkondi protective statuette from the Kongo population of the Congo

Before 1892 – Wood, glass, feathers, pigments including ochre and kaolin, plant fibres.

Red, black and white. The red and black face of the little monkey is threatening. These are the colours of danger and death. As for the white of the body, it evokes the invisible world inhabited by the spirits of the dead.

An unusual prominent belly closed by a piece of glass. Perhaps it still holds magical contents composed of symbolic ingredients and consecrated by the mediator (*a type of priest*): white clay, earth, hair, etc. This type of sculpture is a container for spirits, the *nkisi*. The feathers probably link the statuette to the sky spirits.

This statue is not evil. These eyes, which are so large that they show their whites, are called "cutting eyes." They are said to be able to see beyond what is visible because the statue is used for protection or soothsaying: to resolve conflicts, identify robbers or witches, prevent attacks by wild animals and so on.

This little monkey seems to stand guard at the entrance to a box where a series of nkisi are exhibited. **Continue** across the continent towards the southern and eastern regions. The funeral posts from Madagascar stand in front of a glass facade printed with plant motifs. Before turning to the right towards America, with blue floor, you can make a detour through Ethiopia in the last box.

The path then divides in three parts. The first shows America from the 18th century to the present. An intermediate area offers a meditation on the nature of Amerindian objects. Finally, you will discover Pre-Columbian America (*Aztecs, Mayas, Incas, etc.*).



... communicate with the spirit world and aid hunting...

Mask of “The Moon Spirit” Yup’ik population (Inuit group)

Around 1912 – Wood, pigments.

“The Yupiit believed that all hunted animals went to the moon. You should treat animals with respect so that in return, during reincarnation, they will come to you because you have treated them well. You will thus be able to hunt them over and over.” (John McIntyre, Yup’ik sculptor, beginning of 21st century).

In the center, a face that is half-man, half-seal. This mask illustrates the Yup’ik belief in a superposition between the world of animals and that of humans; men take on the appearance of an animal when they wear clothing made of animal skins, thus revealing a shared nature.

An art of assembly: the feathers evoke birds, the wooden hoop symbolizes the passageway from the supernatural world of the shaman (*intercessor between the world of men and that of spirits, animals and the dead*); the hands with the thumbs cut off reveal the impossibility of spirits to retain you; the head of a carnivorous animal (*without doubt a wolf*) is associated to the moon spirit; the wooden discs represent the air bubbles that rise to the surface of water, indicating the presence of a seal to the hunter.

Go to the left of the showcase showing other Yupiit masks and at the edge of the case, watch an extract of the film entitled *Nanook of the North*, which includes a seal hunt. After the large bear totem pole from the Indians of the Northwest Coast (*Canada*), **continue along** the façade to the necklace made of bear claws.



... hunting, necessary for food and for dressing up in a feather headdress...

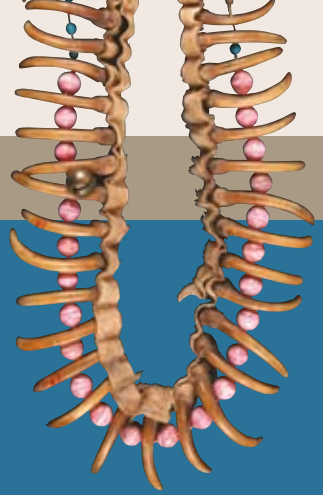
Necklace of grizzly-bear claws

North America – Grizzly claws, skin, beads.

The grizzly, the largest and most ferocious animal on the North American continent, was hunted by the Indians for its meat, fat and fur. From its claws, they made necklaces. Symbols of the exploits of hunters and warriors, they were worn by many of the Indians painted by Westerners in the 19th century, as you will see in the paintings behind you.

These paintings are by George Catlin, an American who was fascinated by the Indians. After travelling for six years over the Great Plains to get to know them, he was welcomed to France in 1845 by King Louis-Philippe, who ordered paintings from him to thank him for the dance show by Catlin's troupe of Iowa Indians, including Little Wolf and White Cloud, shown here.

Costumes and ornaments convey the dignity and rank of those who wear them. Victorious warriors also wore Golden Eagle feathers, symbols of strength and bravery.



Walk in front of the feathered objects from the Amazon. You will enter a themed area: the objects from the American continent share common features that are highlighted here, in each showcase. Next, you will find the oldest works in the Museum, from archaeological America before the European conquests. The following, very small piece is on the left inside a glass case on the wall.

... a feathered headdress for this Aztec god, sculpted from a precious material...

Huitzilopchtli, Aztec god from Mexico

1350-1521 – Jadeite

The small size of this exhibit does not mirror its importance. At present, it is the only known statue of Huitzilopochtli, Aztec god of war and sun. His name means "southern hummingbird." This bird, which is found on the back of the statue, represents the sun at its zenith. Aztecs believed that warriors would be reincarnated as hummingbirds.

This sculpture was carved in jadeite, a very precious material for the Aztecs. Its glistening aspect and green colour evoked water and corn, sources of life.

Huitzilopochtli is seated, with a feathered helmet on his head. He wears ear ornaments and a shell pendant, signs of his power. A snake's head replaces his left foot. On his left shoulder is a knife that was used for human sacrifices, the aim of which was to feed the sun in order to delay its predicted disappearance. The showcase on the right contains a real sacrificial knife.



All the surrounding works are Aztec.

Go down a gentle incline and **turn to the left** of the large stone Huastec god towards a case filled with objects in precious materials.

15

...from a precious material, this mask illustrates the conquistadors' quest for gold.

Funerary mask Nazca

From the southern coast of Peru – 200 B.C. to 700 A.D. – Gold leaf.

Weighing only 547 grams, this delicate gold leaf has been cut and hammered into the shape of a human face haloed by six snakes. The two snakes at the top of the head become birds that remind us of the importance of feathers on the American continent.

Eldorado (“the place of gold”): the Spanish conquistadores believed this imaginary country was in South America.

It was, in fact, in Peru around 1500 to 2000 years before our era that metalworking appeared in America. Gold, considered to be an emanation of the sun in the Pre-Columbian societies of the Andes, took its sacred character from its indestructibility.

This mask from the Nazca culture, in the south of Peru, was placed in a tomb on a mummy called *Fardo*. Funerary rituals in this region required using valuable objects and finery (*ornaments, masks, tunics, etc.*) that bestowed eternity on the dead.



After this trip to all parts of the world, **turn around and get back to Paris** with the Eiffel Tower, framed by a gap in the walls of the building created by Jean Nouvel.



*If you would like to know more,
here are some ideas:*

- **Go up** to the suspended galleries and discover, for example, the secrets of greetings from around the world, thanks to multimedia programmes.
- **Take a break** at the Jacques Kerchache Reading Room, in the entrance hall, to flick through the catalogues from all museum exhibitions while your children read comics.
- **Broaden** your knowledge and talk with specialists, who will take you on a visit: guided tours, workshops...
- **Discover** the museum collections with your family with the help of family-trails, available for free at the information desk.
- You haven't yet seen the Museum's **emblem**: the little sculpture of Chupicuaro. It is one of the 120 masterpieces of the quai Branly museum that are on display in the world's greatest museum: the Louvre!

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