



Marly State Property

While Versailles was being transformed to become the chief residence of the King and the Court, Louis XIV commissioned Jules-Hardouin Mansart to convert the Marly estate, to escape the stifling etiquette of Court life.

The work began in 1679 and was sufficiently far advanced in 1686 for Louis XIV to be able to stay there for the first time. Louis continued to embellish the park throughout the rest of his life. He notably created the "Rivière" or "Grande Cascade" (waterfall) in 1697-98, and installed the "Grand Abreuvoir à chevaux" (horse trough) from 1698 onward. Marly's heyday ended with the death of Louis XIV.

Being considered too costly to maintain, the park was extensively altered under the Regency, then neglected under the Revolution, which sold it off in 1799 to an industrialist named Sagniel. Sagniel was ruined in 1806, and he demolished the château and its outbuildings to sell off the building materials. Bought by Napoleon the following year, the estate of Marly-le-Roi has belonged to the State ever since.

The original feature of Marly's grounds is the way they respect the nature of the terrain, consisting of a steep-sided, north-facing valley. The garden is organized around two broad alleys, running east-west and south-north, which intersect in the main Salon of the Pavillon Soleil (Sun Pavilion), whose siting and distribution are evoked symbolically by a grassy bank and flagstones.

To the east, the Royal Gate opens onto the Royal Alley, down which Louis XIV used to drive as he arrived from Versailles. The symmetrically opposing Allée du Belvédère rises up the western slope.

Behind the château, to the south, the visitor can see the greensward which replaced the river in 1728, and the round pond, enlivened by a great fountain in summer, built in 1930-32 on the site of the former Bassin de la Demi-Lune des Vents (half-moon fountain of the winds).

To the north lie the Bassin des Quatre Gerbes (four-spray fountain) and the Grande Pièce d'Eau (great pond), underscored by a row of yew trees on three sides. They are flanked by the Allées de Portiques to east and west, leading up to the Abreuvoir (drinking trough) terrace, where replicas of the celebrated Chevaux de Marly (bronze statues of horses) were added in 1985.