

Where is Mona Lisa?



Mona Lisa is one of the most famous paintings of Leonardo da Vinci. It is a picture of a woman who is smiling mysteriously. Many people have wondered what she was smiling at. Leonardo's famous painting, the Mona Lisa, today hangs in the Louvre museum Paris preserving some of the world's rarest art pieces and antiques which are beyond all evaluation today.

Mona Lisa was painted by Leonardo da Vinci between 1503 and 1506. Mona Lisa was the wife of a Florentine gentleman, Francesco del Gioconda. That is why she is also called La Gioconda. Leonardo was 51 and she was 24 when the painting started. She used to come to the great master's studio in the later afternoon when the light was soft. Leonardo worked hard on this painting for about three years. During the course of painting, he became fascinated both with his model and the portrait. The portrait has retained that exclusive aura about itself. The face, enigmatic in expression, has tantalized the millions over the years. The painting seems to be as alive as the beautiful woman. The landscape behind her adds a mysterious backdrop. Leonardo da Vinci was himself charmed by it and never gave the portrait to Francesco. He always made the excuse that he had not quite finished it. He carried it with him wherever he went. While he painted her portrait, Leonardo used musicians, singers and jesters to keep her in a merry mood.

In 1516 when Leonardo migrated to France from Italy he was given a beautiful palace in Loire Valley by King Francis I. It is believed that Francis I paid, 4000 gold crowns for the Mona Lisa but could acquire it only after the artist's death in 1519. Thereafter, it remained in the possession of the kings and emperors of France. In 1800, it was in the possession of Napoleon Bonaparte and hung in his bedroom. During the

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period of 450 years this portrait has gone out of France only twice. Once in 1911, the picture was stolen from the Louvre and found two years later in Italy. The second time it was for 26 days on a fantastically well guarded and highly insured visit to the United States of America as a guest of President, John F. Kennedy.

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