

Société Française de Minéralogie et de Cristallographie

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MINERALOGICAL COLLECTIONS IN PARIS

Sorbonne Université Mineral Collection

Sorbonne Université's mineral collection is one of the oldest in France. The first documented acquisition dates to 1823, when François Sulpice Beudant (holder of the chair of mineralogy at the Sorbonne) purchased 1,146 minerals for research and teaching purposes. The collection has continued to grow through exchanges, donations and other acquisitions. Managed by the university's mineralogy laboratories until 2022, it came under the direction of Sorbonne Université's pôle Collections Scientifiques et Patrimoine in January 2023. The collection currently comprises over 16,000 minerals, covering some 1,700 of the 5901 known species. Since 1970, some of these samples are on display at the Pierre et Marie Curie Campus, Place Jussieu in Paris. Today, it's a university museum that not only actively contributes to research, training, and scientific outreach, but is also involved in the conservation, study, and promotion of a remarkable geological heritage. The minerals, selected for their rarity and aesthetic value, are presented in 24 panoramic (FIG. 1) and 17 walls display cases. Among these rarities are three of the world's seven largest specimens of cumengeite (FIG. 2) from the Amelia de Boleo mine in Mexico, closed in 1974. In an alcove devoted to radioactive minerals, it is also possible to discover some very beautiful uraniferous rocks from France and Africa (FIG. 3).



FIGURE 1 Collection gallery.



FIGURE 2 Cuprosklovdowskite 27×12×10 cm, Katanga, République Démocratique du Congo.
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FIGURE 3 Cumengeite 3×3×3 cm, Amelia, Boleo, Mexico.
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The Mineralogy Museum of Paris School of Mines (Mines Paris – PSL)

Created in 1794, the mineralogy collection of Paris School of Mines was originally called the Cabinet des Mines, with the mission of gathering "all the productions of the globe and all the productions of the Republic arranged according to the order of localities" (FIG. 4). From its inception, its objective was strategic, aimed at inventorying the potential resources of nature for their use in industry.

Currently, it is among the most comprehensive and spectacular in the world, with 100,000 samples in the collection, of which 5,000 are on display, representing more than a thousand mineral species (FIG. 5). Beyond minerals, it also includes meteorites, rocks, gems, and artificial



FIGURE 4 One of the 12 rooms of the mineral gallery of Mines Paris – PSL.

materials. The samples are thus the result of nearly 230 years of collections, constituting an inventory of the geodiversity of our planet, while showcasing their strategic interests.

The collection serves as an essential support for teaching and research, while also acting as a means of scientific and cultural mediation on these themes. These natural objects are also a source of artistic inspiration, as seen in the works of Roger Caillois and George Sand. The museum thus also welcomes artists and organizes artistic exhibitions on top of scientific ones, establishing a symbiosis between art and science.

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The "minerals & gems" collection of the National Museum of Natural History

Sampling the planet's mineral diversity has been the mission of the National Museum of Natural History in Paris, France, since 1626. Originally, minerals were included with medicinal plants in the "Droguier du Roi" due to their attributed medicinal virtues.

This collection, initially housed in the "Cabinet du Roi" between 1633 and 1635, was first established in the Royal Garden of Medicinal Plants, now known as the "Jardin des Plantes." The Jardin du Roi, inaugurated in 1635, opened its doors to the public in 1640.

Today, this collection ranks among the five most important in the world, both in terms of volume and scientific and historical value. Over nearly 400 years, approximately 140,000 specimens have been gathered from all over the globe through naturalist expeditions, donations, purchases, and patronage. These samples are preserved in the Gallery of Mineralogy and Geology.

The collection includes more than 300 types of species, over 4,000 cut stones, and features remnants of the French crown jewels, the Bischoffstein diamond collection, and pieces from Pierre Pont Morgan with Tiffany designs. It also holds over 60,000 unique specimens of French heritage and is particularly noted for its minerals from Madagascar. It houses historical collections from notable figures such as the Tsars, Gillet de Laumond, Romé de l'Isle, Haüy, De Bournon, and Vésignié.

The finest pieces from this extensive collection are showcased in the "Trésors de la Terre" exhibition, which has attracted an average of 70,000 visitors per year since its opening in December 2014.

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<https://www.mnhn.fr/en/mineral-and-gem-collection>