# Napoleon’s bicorne hat expected to fetch £700,000 in Paris auction of emperor’s prized possessions



Napoleon Bonaparte, a figure whose influence and intrigue continue to resonate, is once again at the forefront of public interest. A bicorne hat associated with the French emperor is now the focal point of an impressive auction in Paris, drawing the interest of collectors and historians alike. This iconic piece of headwear, expected to fetch up to £700,000, is part of a larger collection that boasts an estimated value exceeding £5 million (€6 million). The auction, organised by Sotheby's, features approximately 100 objects, each reflecting distinct moments from Napoleon's life and his tumultuous reign.

This particular hat, crafted in the unique style that Napoleon famously wore with the wings parallel to his shoulders, was made by Poupard, the emperor's official hat maker. Such distinctive styling not only highlighted his singular presence on the battlefield but also made him recognisable above his peers. The bicorne was later gifted to General Mouton, a trusted commander, signifying a personal connection and the significance of this accessory in Napoleon's narrative.

In addition to the hat, the auction will present various items that illuminate the emperor's personal and political life. Among them is the handwritten marriage contract between Napoleon and his first wife, Joséphine, which could sell for up to £42,000 (€50,000). Their relationship, marked by fervour and discord, reveals much about Napoleon's character and ambitions. Following their divorce—rooted in Joséphine's inability to bear a male heir—the couple continued to correspond, underscoring the complexity of their bond despite its formal dissolution.

Adding further allure to the collection are Napoleon's personal effects, including linen garments complete with faded monograms, and a signature portable campaign bed, an item that highlights both his military lifestyle and home life. This particular bed, which he cherished and took with him even when settling in France, carries an estimated value of £50,000 (€60,000). Such items shed light on the paradox of his public persona as a military leader and his private life, often marked by emotional depth.

As Napoleon's reign unfolded, he achieved monumental military successes, but also faced significant setbacks. The auction not only serves as a testament to his storied life but also reflects a modern renaissance of interest in his legacy, perhaps spurred by Ridley Scott’s 2023 film, featuring Joaquin Phoenix in the title role. The film—which has generated discussion about Napoleon's character and ambitions—may well galvanise renewed public fascination with Napoleonic history.

The richness of Napoleon's story, filled with tragedy, ambition, and defeat, is mirrored in the collection being auctioned. Items like ceremonial swords and personal seals from his reign reflect a bygone era while inviting contemporary audiences to engage with history in tangible ways. The significance of the auction is further underscored by the fact that many pieces are linked to critical moments in Napoleon's life and reveal much about the culture of his time, enriching our understanding of this complex emperor.

With the auction scheduled for June 25 in Paris, public exhibitions showcasing these remarkable items will precede it, first in Hong Kong and then in New York. This blend of history and modern storytelling continues to entice collectors, historians, and casual observers alike, pointing to a legacy that remains as compelling today as it was in the early 19th century.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14740173/Napoleon-hat-auction-prized-possessions.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67465802)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14740173/Napoleon-hat-auction-prized-possessions.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/france-napoleon-hat-auction-17488b43e428aefee869c6b19bed2103), [[5]](https://www.wsls.com/news/world/2023/11/17/one-of-napoleons-signature-bicorne-hats-on-auction-in-france-could-fetch-upwards-of-650000/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14740173/Napoleon-hat-auction-prized-possessions.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/story/2023-11-19/a-hat-worn-by-napoleon-fetches-1-6-million-at-an-auction-of-the-french-emperors-belongings), [[6]](https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2023/nov/19/napoleon-bonapartes-hat-fetches-16-million-at-auct/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14740173/Napoleon-hat-auction-prized-possessions.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20231121/p2g/00m/0in/027000c)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14740173/Napoleon-hat-auction-prized-possessions.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67465802)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14740173/Napoleon-hat-auction-prized-possessions.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67465802> - A bicorne hat worn by Napoleon Bonaparte was sold at a Paris auction for €1.9 million ($2.1 million). The hat, made of black beaver felt and featuring an embroidered tricolor cockade, was valued between €600,000 and €800,000. Historians note that Napoleon's distinctive sideways wearing of the hat made him recognizable in battle. Only about 20 of these hats are believed to remain, many in private collections. The auction also featured other Napoleonic memorabilia, including a silver plate looted from his carriage after the Battle of Waterloo and a wooden vanity case containing personal items. The buyer's identity remains undisclosed.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/france-napoleon-hat-auction-17488b43e428aefee869c6b19bed2103> - A faded and cracked felt bicorne hat worn by Napoleon Bonaparte sold for $2.1 million at an auction of the French emperor’s belongings. The signature broad, black hat was initially valued at 600,000 to 800,000 euros ($650,000-870,000). While other officers customarily wore their bicorne hats with the wings facing front to back, Napoleon wore his with the ends pointing toward his shoulders. The hat on sale was first recovered by Col. Pierre Baillon, a quartermaster under Napoleon, according to the auctioneers. The hat then passed through many hands before industrialist Jean-Louis Noisiez acquired it. The entrepreneur spent more than a half-century assembling his collection of Napoleonic memorabilia, firearms, swords, and coins before his death in 2022.
4. <https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/story/2023-11-19/a-hat-worn-by-napoleon-fetches-1-6-million-at-an-auction-of-the-french-emperors-belongings> - A faded and cracked felt hat worn by Napoléon Bonaparte fetched $1.6 million at an auction of the French emperor’s belongings. The signature broad, black hat was initially valued at 600,000 to 800,000 euros ($650,000-870,000). While other officers customarily wore their hats with the wings facing front to back, Napoléon wore his with the ends pointing toward his shoulders. The hat on sale was first recovered by Col. Pierre Baillon, a quartermaster under Napoléon, according to the auctioneers. The hat then passed through many hands before industrialist Jean-Louis Noisiez acquired it. The entrepreneur spent more than a half-century assembling his collection of Napoleonic memorabilia, firearms, swords, and coins before his death in 2022.
5. <https://www.wsls.com/news/world/2023/11/17/one-of-napoleons-signature-bicorne-hats-on-auction-in-france-could-fetch-upwards-of-650000/> - One of the signature broad, black bicorne hats that Napoleon Bonaparte wore when he ruled 19th-century France and waged war in Europe is expected to fetch upwards of 600,000 euros ($650,000) at an auction. Other history-laden items in the sale of industrialist Jean-Louis Noisiez's collection of Napoleonic memorabilia include a silver plate looted from Napoleon's carriage after his defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. It also includes a wooden vanity case he owned, with razors, a silver toothbrush, scissors, and other personal belongings. The faded black felt hat is the star piece, valued at between 600,000 and 800,000 euros ($650,000 to $870,000).
6. <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2023/nov/19/napoleon-bonapartes-hat-fetches-16-million-at-auct/> - A faded and cracked felt hat worn by Napoléon Bonaparte fetched $1.6 million at an auction of the French emperor’s belongings. The signature broad, black hat was initially valued at 600,000 to 800,000 euros ($650,000-870,000). While other officers customarily wore their hats with the wings facing front to back, Napoléon wore his with the ends pointing toward his shoulders. The hat on sale was first recovered by Col. Pierre Baillon, a quartermaster under Napoléon, according to the auctioneers. The hat then passed through many hands before industrialist Jean-Louis Noisiez acquired it. The entrepreneur spent more than a half-century assembling his collection of Napoleonic memorabilia, firearms, swords, and coins before his death in 2022.
7. <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20231121/p2g/00m/0in/027000c> - A faded and cracked felt bicorne hat worn by Napoleon Bonaparte sold for $2.1 million at an auction of the French emperor’s belongings. The signature broad, black hat was initially valued at 600,000 to 800,000 euros ($650,000-870,000). While other officers customarily wore their bicorne hats with the wings facing front to back, Napoleon wore his with the ends pointing toward his shoulders. The style — known as “en bataille,” or in battle — made it easier for his troops to spot their leader in combat. The hat on sale was first recovered by Col. Pierre Baillon, a quartermaster under Napoleon, according to the auctioneers. The hat then passed through many hands before industrialist Jean-Louis Noisiez acquired it. The entrepreneur spent more than a half-century assembling his collection of Napoleonic memorabilia, firearms, swords, and coins before his death in 2022. The sale came days before the release of Ridley Scott's film 'Napoleon' with Joaquin Phoenix, which is rekindling interest in the controversial French ruler.