# Napoleon’s iconic bicorne hat expected to fetch nearly £700,000 at Paris auction



Napoleon Bonaparte remains a figure of immense historical intrigue, characterised by his dramatic rise and fall during a pivotal era in European history. Known as the "Little Corporal," he captivated the continent with his militaristic prowess, political acumen, and distinct style, immortalised in the iconic bicorne hat that symbolically adorned his head. This famous hat is set to headline a remarkable auction of Napoleon's personal effects at Sotheby's in Paris, with expectations of the hat itself reaching nearly £700,000.

This auction, featuring around 100 items attributable to the emperor, comes with a combined estimated value of over £5 million (€6 million). Among the offerings are personal relics that paint a vivid portrait of Napoleon's life, including his tumultuous relationship with his first wife, Josephine. The handwritten marriage contract between the two, likely to fetch approximately £42,000, serves as a poignant reminder of a union overshadowed by the pressures of legacy and ambition. Notably, a folio believed to have contained their divorce papers is also available, anticipated to sell for about £67,000. These documents encapsulate a marriage replete with both passion and strife, as Napoleon and Josephine maintained correspondence despite their separation.

The bicorne hat set to be sold is especially significant. Crafted by Poupard, Napoleon’s official hat maker, it is a fine example of the style he popularised, worn with wings parallel to his shoulders to stand out visually. Sotheby’s expert, Marine De Cenival, highlights the auction as a rare opportunity to view a collection showcasing every significant moment in Napoleon's life, underscoring his status as arguably the most famous Frenchman in history.

Another intriguing item on offer is Napoleon's portable campaign bed, valued at up to £50,000. Adapted for his comfort during military campaigns, this piece reflects the personal side of a man known foremost for his battlefield exploits. Such items not only provide insight into Napoleon’s character but also signify the extent of his ambitions, as he even took this piece of home on military expeditions.

Napoleon's legacy is not solely tied to his military triumphs. He was a deeply complex individual, navigating the political landscape of post-Revolution France to become Emperor by 1804, a moment lavishly celebrated with a coronation at Notre Dame. He famously wore two crowns during the ceremony, one evoking Roman grandeur and the other harking back to medieval tradition, thereby reinforcing his aspirations of unrivalled power.

The upcoming auction is managed by Pierre-Jean Chalençon, a well-known collector who describes himself as "Napoleon's press officer." His decision to sell this trove—accumulated over years—comes after a series of financial difficulties, reportedly related to a €10 million loan taken out to further his collection. Despite this, Chalençon insists that he is not overly burdened by debt, indicating a more resilient approach to his circumstances.

As this extraordinary auction approaches, it brings not only the thrill of historical nostalgia but also a tangible connection to the complexities of one of history's most pivotal figures. Napoleon's many victories and subsequent trials evoke a narrative that remains deeply compelling, positioned squarely within the annals of rich European history. The auction will additionally feature other significant artefacts, including ceremonial swords and various personal items, each expected to fetch substantial sums, reflecting the enduring fascination with Napoleon Bonaparte.

As the auction date, June 25, 2025, draws nearer, the anticipation not only encompasses the items themselves but also the narratives they carry—a collection that lays bare the life of an emperor forever etched in time.

## 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.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14740173/Napoleon-hat-auction-prized-possessions.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* 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), [[2]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14740173/Napoleon-hat-auction-prized-possessions.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231119-napoleon-s-hat-sells-for-record-sum-at-french-auction)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/19/napoleon-hat-fetches-record-price-paris-auction), [[5]](https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231119-napoleon-s-hat-sells-for-record-sum-at-french-auction)
* 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), [[2]](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.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67465802)
* 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.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14740173/Napoleon-hat-auction-prized-possessions.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 6 – [[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.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14740173/Napoleon-hat-auction-prized-possessions.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231119-napoleon-s-hat-sells-for-record-sum-at-french-auction)

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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.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14740173/Napoleon-hat-auction-prized-possessions.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - An article from the Daily Mail discussing the auction of Napoleon Bonaparte's bicorne hat and other personal items. The hat, crafted by Napoleon's official hat maker, Poupard, was expected to sell for nearly £700,000. Other items include Napoleon's marriage contract with Josephine, a portable campaign bed, and a ceremonial sword and stick from his coronation ceremony. The auction is set to take place at Sotheby's Paris on June 25, 2025.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/19/napoleon-hat-fetches-record-price-paris-auction> - An article from The Guardian reporting on the record sale of Napoleon Bonaparte's bicorne hat at a Paris auction. The hat sold for €1.932 million, surpassing previous records. The article details the hat's unique features, including its sideways orientation, and its historical significance as a symbol of Napoleon's image.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67465802> - A BBC News article covering the sale of Napoleon Bonaparte's bicorne hat at a Paris auction. The hat fetched €1.9 million, exceeding its estimated value. The article discusses the hat's distinctive sideways orientation and its role as a recognizable symbol of Napoleon during his reign.
5. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231119-napoleon-s-hat-sells-for-record-sum-at-french-auction> - An article from France 24 reporting on the record sale of Napoleon Bonaparte's bicorne hat at a French auction. The hat sold for €1.932 million, breaking previous records. The article provides details about the hat's features, its historical significance, and the context of the auction.
6. <https://www.wsls.com/news/world/2023/11/17/one-of-napoleons-signature-bicorne-hats-on-auction-in-france-could-fetch-upwards-of-650000/> - An article from WSLS discussing the auction of one of Napoleon's signature bicorne hats in France. The hat was valued between €600,000 and €800,000. The article highlights the hat's unique sideways orientation and its significance as a symbol of Napoleon's image.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/23/napoleon-josephine-marriage-contract-sold-auction> - An article from The Guardian reporting on the sale of Napoleon and Josephine's marriage contract at auction. The contract, signed in 1796, was sold for €350,000 to the Paris Museum of Letters and Manuscripts. The article provides details about the contract's contents and its historical context.