The Catacombs of Paris

When one thinks of Paris, images of the Eiffel Tower or the Louvre Museum may come to mind. After all, Paris is famous for its sidewalk cafes and shops. What you may not know is below the streets of Paris, there is a place where you can visit over six million skeletons!

The catacombs were started in 1786. Paris was running out of room to bury the dead and the leaders were worried. The solution was to dig up the skeletons that were buried and move the skeletons underground into the old rock quarries. Within 15 months, millions of bones were dug out and moved below the streets of Paris. The workers had to move the bones at night.

Above the door outside of the catacombs, a sign tells you, “Stop! This is the empire of death”. Some of the bones that were moved were turned into patterns and designs. One example can be found with the remains of the people who were buried at the Carmes Convent. The skeletons were turned into religious symbols and artwork. The symbols and artwork were mainly created from skulls and leg bones.

Kings would sometimes have parties in the catacombs. During World War II, people hid in the catacombs to escape Hitler’s troops. Today, the catacombs are a tourist attraction. For the price of a ticket, you have the chance to go underground and look at skeletons which were turned into artwork. In one place inside, you can find a quote which says, “Man, like a flower of the field, flourishes while the breath is in him, and does not remain, nor know longer his own place.”