

Amazing staircases in the world

What is a staircase? A means of getting from point A to point B, but stairs are more than functional. They can be figurative, fantastical, and worth a special journey just to climb them.

■ Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania

Boxer Rocky Balboa's training run up the 72 steps of Philadelphia Art Museum is one of the iconic scenes from the 1976 film "Rocky". A statue of the champion at the base of the steps, made for "Rocky III" and installed in its present location in 2006, is one of the city's most iconic (and most photographed) landmarks of the city. The staircase itself dates to 1928, when the Art Museum building opened to the public.



Philadelphia Museum of Art, Rocky Steps

■ Tulip Staircase, London

This 17th century architectural wonder – it is Britain's first self-supporting spiral staircase, meaning it lacks the usual load-bearing center column – is part of the Queen's House in Greenwich. It is also the site of one of the most famous paranormal events of the 20th century. In 1966, a retired priest on vacation snapped a photo of the empty Tulip Staircase. The developed film revealed a spectral figure ascending the stairs, something that remains unexplained to this day.



Tulip Staircase, London

■ Chand Baori, Rajasthan, India

Next to the Harshat Mata temple, this set of steps is one of India's oldest, with portions dating to the 8th century. More than 3,500 steps zigzag up and down the 13-story structure, which descends about 100 feet below ground.



Chand Baori Staircase

■ Lion Rock, Sigiria, Sri Lanka

Sigiria is an ancient rock fortress near Dambulla in Sri Lanka. It sits atop a rock nearly 200 metres high and is reached by climbing 1,200 steps. Halfway up the rock, on a small plateau two giant lion's paws mark the start of the final climb. Ancient frescoes adorn the rock walls and the view from the top is spectacular.



Lion Rock Staircase

■ Red Staircase at Lello Bookshop, Porto, Portugal

One of the oldest bookstores in Portugal, Lello Bookshop features an opulent red staircase. The bookshop and with it the staircase were designed by Francisco Xavier Esteves, an engineer who made the flight of steps stand with very little support from below. Seen from atop, the staircase resembles two streams of water flowing into one. Additionally, Lello Bookshop also features a stained-glass ceiling and carved wooden shelves which hold centuries-old books.

■ 16th Avenue Tiled Steps, San Francisco, California

Possibly the world’s largest mosaic staircase, the 16th Avenue Tiled Steps were a community project led by Irish ceramicist Aileen Barr and San Francisco mosaic artist Colette Crutcher. Located in the quiet residential Golden Gate Heights neighborhood, the 163 steps contain 2,000 handmade tiles on which over 300 locals worked. The 75,000 tiles, mirror, and stained-glass fragments come together as a sea-to-stars themed mosaic.

1 Read the descriptions of the staircases and write the names.

1. Which staircase is in a place where you can buy books?
2. Which staircase has more than 1,000 steps to reach the top?
3. Which staircase is portrayed in a famous film?
4. Which staircase is linked to a paranormal event?
5. Which staircase has got steps that go below ground?
6. Which staircase is the work of two artists?

2 These people love travelling and visiting impressive places. Decide which staircase is the most suitable for them to climb.

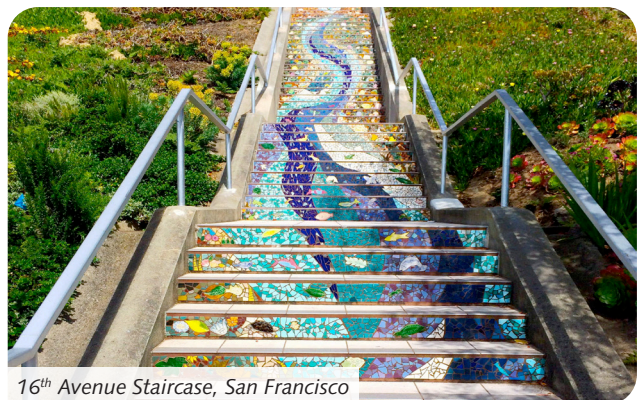
- A. Paula loves Eastern cultures and especially ancient temples.
- B. Graham and Joan are curious amateur photographers.
- C. Kevin is an engineer who is studying the supporting structures of staircases... ..
- D. Martha is passionate about cinema
- E. Alejandro has been studying at an Art School in Buenos Ayres
- F. Mick is an athlete and he usually trains climbing long staircases.

3 Answer the following questions

1. When does the staircase of Philadelphia Art Museum date back to?
2. Where is the Tulip Staircase?
3. What is the characteristic of Chand Baori staircase?
4. What can be found at the halfway of Lion gate rock?
5. How many handmade tiles does the 16th Avenue Tiled Steps contain?
6. What does Lello Bookshop feature in addition to the staircase?



Lello Bookshop Staircase



16th Avenue Staircase, San Francisco