

Roland Garros: A Parisian love affair



A city of passion, elegance and flair, Paris is the destination for the French Open at Roland Garros. First staged in 1891 as the *Championnat de France*, the two-week showpiece, played on iconic red clay, enthralled crowds with breathtaking rallies and feats of physical endurance

Rafael Nadal

"King of Clay" is dominant at Roland Garros, winning 13 out of 16 singles titles since his tournament debut in 2005

Wins at Roland Garros (Open Era, men):

| Rafael Nadal | ESP | Matches W/L: 100/2 |
|-----------------|-----|--------------------|
| Novak Djokovic | SRB | 74/15 |
| Roger Federer | SUI | 70/17 |
| Guillermo Vilas | ARG | 57/17 |
| Ivan Lendl | CZE | 53/12 |

Nadal holds record for most singles titles at individual Grand Slam – surpassing tally of Margaret Court (below) who won 11 Australian Open titles

Titles at single Grand Slam (Open Era, men):

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|----|
| Australian Open | Novak Djokovic | 9 |
| Roland Garros | Rafael Nadal | 13 |
| Wimbledon | Roger Federer | 8 |
| U.S. Open | Jimmy Connors, Pete Sampras, Federer | 5 |

Surface

Clay court concept originated in 1880 when powdered terracotta was used in Cannes to cover grass courts wilting in heat

ROLAND GARROS COMPOSITION

Playing surface: Red brick dust
Improves ball visibility – slippery top layer allows players to slide into shots

Linking layer:
Crushed white limestone

Cushion:
Clinker (coal residue)

Loose aggregation:
At least 30cm of crushed gravel for stability

Foundation:
Larger stones for drainage

Comparison of surface impacts:

| | Ball speed | Consistency | Height of bounce |
|-----------|------------|-------------|------------------|
| Clay | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | ●●●●● |
| Hardcourt | ○○○○○○○ | ○○○○○○○○○ | ○○○○○○○ |
| Grass | ○○○○○○○○○ | ○○○○ | ○○○○○ |

Slower ball speed encourages tactical rallies – topspin, slice, and drop shots all used to develop advantage

Timeline

1891: Inaugural French Clay-Court Championships, reserved exclusively for members of French tennis clubs. Tournament alternates between three venues in early years



1925: French Open born when tournament opens to international competition. French stars, including six-time champion Suzanne Lenglen (left), still dominate

1928
Court complex opens in Paris. Name honours Roland Garros, pioneer aviator killed in World War I

1932: Famous four "Mousquetaires" – René Lacoste, Jean Borotra, Henri Cochet and Jacques Brugnon (below) – bow out after sharing 10 titles over decade of dominance



1968: Hosts first Grand Slam of Open Era
1973: Margaret Court wins record 13th Paris title, totalling five singles and eight doubles

1974-86: Tennis legends Björn Borg and Chris Evert establish new era of clay court superiority

1979: Five new courts bring total to 10 – further expansions follow in 1986 and 1994

2000
Mary Pierce (right) is most recent French singles champion

2018-20: Major expansion includes complete demolition and rebuild of 90-year-old Court Philippe Chatrier to accommodate retractable roof



Rafa at Roland Garros:

| | |
|-----|----------------------|
| 243 | Total hours on court |
| 298 | Sets won |
| 27 | Sets lost |

Only Robin Söderling (2009) and Novak Djokovic (2015) have beaten Nadal in Paris. He withdrew through injury in 2016

Chris Evert

Steffi Graf
Justine Henin
Monica Seles
Martina Navratilova
Martina Hingis

CLAY COURT QUEENS
All-time win ratio (%)



Evert on clay: 312 Matches won, 20 Lost

Steffi Graf (inset) tops winners' table in Paris

Wins at Roland Garros (Open Era, women):

| Steffi Graf | GER | Matches W/L: 84/10 |
|-------------------|-----|--------------------|
| Chris Evert | USA | 72/6 |
| Arantxa Sanchez | ESP | 72/13 |
| Serena Williams | USA | 66/13 |
| Conchita Martinez | ESP | 62/18 |



Evert has best career win ratio on clay of any player (94%) – Nadal is on 91.6%

Court Philippe Chatrier
Capacity: 15,000
Retractable roof completed in 2020. Closes in 15 minutes, allowing all-weather play and night sessions

Serres d'Auteuil

Court Simonne Mathieu
5,000-seater sunken arena

Roland Garros Village
Administration, reception areas and panoramic terraces

Avenue Gordon Bennett

Orangery
Public services and gourmet restaurant

Place des Mousquetaires

Court Suzanne Lenglen
Capacity: 10,000

Fonds des Princes
Sunken 2,200-seater court

Chris Evert

Seven-time champion at Roland Garros. First two trophies won during 125-match winning streak on clay (1973-79) – Open Era record on single surface for any player, male or female



Roll call of champions

MOST CHAMPIONSHIPS (OPEN ERA)

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 2005-08, 2010-14, 2017-20 | Rafael Nadal ESP | 13 7 | Chris Evert USA | 1974, 75, 79, 80, 83, 85, 86 |
| 1974, 75, 78, 79, 80, 81 | Bjorn Borg SWE | 6 6 | Steffi Graf GER | 1987, 88, 93, 95, 96, 99 |
| 1982, 85, 88 | Mats Wilander SWE | 3 4 | Justine Henin BEL | 2003, 05, 06, 07 |
| 1984, 86, 87 | Ivan Lendl CZE | 3 3 | | |
| 1997, 2000, 01 | Gustavo Kuerten BRA | 3 | | |

◀ Coupe des Mousquetaires

Coupe Suzanne Lenglen

*Plus 2 in pre-Open era
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Sources: Roland Garros, ATP, WTA

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