

Statue of Liberty

The Statue of Liberty is one of the most recognizable icons of the United States and was, from 1886 until the jet age, often one of the first glimpses of the United States for millions of immigrants after ocean voyages from Europe. The Statue of Liberty is a monument that was presented by the people of France to the United States of America in 1886 to celebrate its centennial. Standing on Liberty Island in New York Harbor, it welcomes visitors, immigrants, and returning Americans traveling by ship.

The statue is made of a sheathing of pure copper, hung on a framework of steel (originally puddled iron) with the exception of the flame of the torch, which is coated in gold leaf (originally made of copper and later altered to hold glass panes). It stands atop a rectangular stonework pedestal with a foundation in the shape of an irregular eleven-pointed star. The statue is 151 ft (46 m) tall, but with the pedestal and foundation, it is 305 ft (93 m) tall.

The Statue of Liberty quickly became a popular icon, featured in scores of posters, pictures, motion pictures, and books. Henry story relates a fanciful conversation between "Mrs. Liberty" and another statue; it figured in 1918 Liberty Loan posters. The statue walked from Liberty Island to Manhattan in the 1989 film, *Ghostbusters II*, to defeat the villain with positive energy when it inspired hope amongst cheering New Yorkers. It was the setting for the climax of the first *X-Men* film. It can also be seen lying broken on the ground in the movie *Independence Day*, after the first wave of attacks by the extraterrestrial biological beings from outer space. In the 2004 movie *The Day After Tomorrow*, the statue gets frozen, and in the 2008 movie *Cloverfield*, it is decapitated by a giant monster; its head lands in a Manhattan street. In the 1994 *Gundam* series *G Gundam*, the protagonist hides his *Gundam* in the abandoned statue and then makes it jump out of the statue, destroying it. In the film, *National Treasure: Book of Secrets*, the sister statue in Paris provides a clue. The history of the Statue of Liberty is retold in the hit 2008 illustrated book *Lady Liberty: A Biography*.

Except for a period of time between 11 September, 2001, and 4 July 2009, the interior of the statue has been open to visitors. Visitors arrive by ferry and climb the circular single-file stairs (limited by the available space) inside the metallic statue, exposed to the sun out in the harbor (the interior reaching extreme temperatures, particularly in summer), and about 30 people at a time can fit up into the crown. This provides a broad view of New York Harbor (it faces the ocean) through 25 windows, the largest approximately 18" (46 cm) in height. The view does not, therefore, include the skyline of New York City, except through the smallest windows on the left side of the crown. The wait outside regularly exceeds three hours, excluding the wait for ferries and ferry tickets. The Statue of Liberty tour, in part or as a comprehensive tour package, is well worth the trip and potential waiting lines to purchase ferry tickets. Both The Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island together provide the visitor a valuable lesson in American history, and an experience they'll remember for a lifetime.