

Ramp versus Staircase



Interior of the ramp with side windows, Pavillon Le Corbusier

“A staircase separates one floor from another: a ramp connects them.” The ramp is a key element of Le Corbusier’s architectural vocabulary. The architect loved striding from one story to another, which was only possible with a ramp. The stairs inserted between the floor slabs were only to be given preference if one was in a hurry.

When Le Corbusier used the two different circulation modes in the same building, he wanted to offer people a choice. But he was just as interested in playing formal and symbolic contrasts off against each other. In Zurich, a closed ramp is attached to the outside of the compact exhibition pavilion, which has an open staircase at its center. While in other buildings—such as the iconic Villa Savoye—the ramp and the staircase are set directly next to one another in stark contrast, in the pavilion they are part of an “architectural promenade.”

<https://eguide.pavillon-le-corbusier.ch/en/objekt/rampe-versus-treppe/>