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## Introduction

France is one of the "classics among tourist countries". It offers mountain ranges, coastlines like in Brittany or along the Mediterranean Sea, cities with a rich cultural heritage, châteaux and castles like Versailles, countryside, vineyards in Burgundy and the metropolis of Paris with the Louvre, boulevards, the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe and cathedral of Notre-Dame.

In the eastern parts of France there are famous skiing resorts in the Alps. Other famous cities are Avignon with the old popes' palace, Arles, Aix-en-Provence, Marseille, Nice, Orléans on the Loire River, Strasbourg on the border to Germany or Lyon.

France is easy to discover by train. It offers a high-speed train service called TGV (train à grande vitesse) as well as regional services, both operated by the SNCF.

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## 1. France on the world tourist`s map

## Transportation in France

## Flying

With its worldwide network of 340 destinations in 91 countries, served by its own aircraft or those of its SkyTeam Alliance partners, Air France naturally plays a predominant role in promoting France. Thanks to its connecting hub at Paris-Charles de Gaulle, Air France can fly you from one end of the earth to the other through a single airport:

82 cities in France and Europe are linked to 83 destinations worldwide

Shorter connecting times of between 45 minutes and two hours

Air France, the national company, links most of the large towns to Paris in one hour on average, as well as connections between the regional towns.

Air France information and reservations in France: 0845 0845 111 or visit airfrance.com

Paris airports: there are two international airports in Paris: Roissy-Charles de Gaulle and Orly.

Transfers to Paris can be made by shuttle bus, taxi or metro for Orly (Orlyval) …For all information flight arrivals and departures, transportation to and from the city's two airports and other passenger information visit the Aeroports de Paris website.

## By car

A car is a convenient way to move around in France. Roads are very well maintained and the French road network includes 4960 miles of motorways (many with tolls) which link Paris and the main provincial towns and cities.

Before taking to the road in France, make sure you know the French highway code well.

For the official text of the Highway Code click here.

To find out about the road signs, click here.

Driver's License

A valid US driver's license is sufficient. The legal driving age in France is 18 years. An international driver's license is not required for U. S. citizens. You are also required to carry the vehicle's registration document, and the current insurance certificate (a green card is not mandatory but remains internationally recognized and helpful). Also, a nationally plate or sticker is required. Car rental agencies will provide their customers with all these necessary documents.

For more information consult the website http://www.ambafrance-us.org/visitingfrance/driving. asp

Eurotunnel

If you are coming from Great Britain, you can use the Eurotunnel. Eurotunnel's car carrying service runs via the Channel Tunnel from Folkestone to Calais/Coquelles. Taking as little as 35 minutes platform to platform, it is a fast and exciting way to France and beyond. The service operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year with up to 4 departures an hour at peak periods.

Consult the website www.eurotunnel.com or phone 08705 35 35 35.

Roads

The road network is very well developed in France: nearly a million kilometres, of which almost 8,000 kilometres are motorways. There is usually a toll for motorways. To find out everything about toll charges, service stations, rest areas, restaurants, filling stations, and hotels along your route, and for details of your journey, consult the website www.autoroutes. fr

Finding your way

There are numerous guides and road maps available at bookshops, service stations…

The main reference maps are Michelin and IGN.

Some Internet sites suggest different ways of getting from one place to another (from the quickest to tourist routes with stopovers…): www.viamichelin.com or http://www.mappy. fr

Times to avoid

At peak times (7.30 - 9.00am and 5.30 - 7.30pm generally during the week), take care on the approaches to large towns and town centers: the traffic is often very dense. Some problems can also be found at "sensitive" places at the start of holiday periods.

## By train

Train service in France is efficient, punctual, and comfortable. It is one of the most popular ways to get around, allowing travelers to view the countryside in a swift, but leisurely manner. France's extensive railway network connects large cities and towns throughout the country. Smaller towns without train stations are generally linked by bus service to the nearest station. The French National Railroads' (Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer or SNCF, www.sncf. fr) network of inter-city rail links also provides frequent express and high-speed train service known as the TGV or Train à Grande Vitesse. Operating at a commercial speeds of 186mph, the high-speed network also includes European routes, featuring the Eurostar which connects Paris to London in just 2h35 and the Thalys going to Brussels and Amsterdam in 1h30 and 4 hours respectively. For added convenience, the Paris Charles-de-Gaulle and Lyon Saint-Exupery Airports have high-speed train stations.

The price of train travel in France depends on whether you choose first or second class, as well as on the time and date of travel. If you planning your rail travel before you go, there are a variety off affordable and flexible passes (non-consecutive days of rail travel), including packages available for the U. S. traveler through your travel agent or www.sncf. fr. Rail passes for France include the France Railpass, the France Rail'n Drive, Eurail.combo-country passes are also available, including the France n'Italy Pass and the all new France'n Spain pass.

## Bus Tours / RVs

The parking of tourist coaches is controlled. Before parking in a town or at a tourist site, please ensure from the Tourist Office that there is reserved parking for coaches.

Bus Coach traffic in Paris

Ile Saint-Louis and Ile de la Cité

Coaches are banned from the Ile de la Cité and the Ile Saint-Louis from 5th April 2003, with the exception of through routes. River shuttles will be used to carry visitors from the other side of the Seine.

The Paris Council has the aim of gradually reducing the number of coaches driving in Paris. One of the main methods of achieving this aim is by organising tourist transport on the Seine for visits to Notre Dame and the Ile de la Cité.

Shuttles will now be provided all year round from the Port de la Bourdonnais and the Port de Suffren on the west and the Port du Bercy on the east. Set-down points for the Ile de la Cité will be at the Port de la Tournelle and on the Quai des Orfèvres.

Streets closed to coach traffic, parking and drop-off points, and tourist areas are shown on the Préfecture de Police website.

## Recreational Vehicles

Use of a motor caravan as a means of transport is considered no different from that of an ordinary car.

Overnight parking of motor caravans is controlled in certain cities. In this case, there are special sites made available for motor caravans.

"Camping-car Magazine" publishes the "official guide to tourist stopping-places for motor caravans"; it is sold in newspaper kiosks and lists 1,700 places in France adapted for motor caravans (waste, water…).

For more information on motor caravans:

http://www.vehicule-loisirs.com/

## By Boat

Ferries

Here are the main shipping companies to cross the Channel:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Company | Routes | Approximate Times |
| P & O Portsmouth Peninsular House Wharf Road Portsmouth P02 8TA Tel: 08705 20 20 20 www.poferries.com | Portsmouth - Le Havre | 5 hours 30 (day sailing) |
| Portsmouth - Le Havre | 7 hours or 8 hours if include French tour (night sailing) |
| Portsmouth - Cherboug | 5 hours (day sailing) |
| Portsmouth - Cherbourg | 7 hours or 8 hours if include French tour (night sailing) |
| Portsmouth - Cherbourg (Portsmouth Express) | 2 hours 45 (April - Sept) |
| Dover - Calais |  |
| Hull - Zeebrugge |  |
| SeaFrance Eastern Docks Dove, Kent CT16 1JA Tel: 08705 711 711 www.seafrance.com | Dover - Calais | From 1 hour 10 and 1 hour 30 (depending on the vessel) |
| Southern Ferries/SNCM 179 Piccadilly London W1V 9DB Tel: 0207 491 4968 Fax: 0207 491 3502 www.sncm. fr | From Marseilles to:  Bastia, Calvi, Ile Rousse, Ajaccio, Propriano, Porto-Vecchio | From 9 hours to 12 hours |
| Nice - Calvi/Ile Rousse | 3 hours |
| Nice - Bastia | 3 hours 40 (day sailing) 7 hours 30 (night sailing) |
| Nice - Ajaccio | 4 hours 15 (day sailing) 7 hours 30 (night sailing) |
| Brittany Ferries The Brittany Centre Wharf Road Portsmouth PO2 8RU Tel: 08705 360 360 www.brittanyferries.com | Portsmouth - Caen | 6 hours |
| Portsmouth - St Malo | 8 hours 45 |
| Poole - Cherbourg | 4 hours 15 |
| (fast ferry May 26 to Sept 30) | 2 hours 15 minutes |
| Plymouth - Roscoff | 6 hours |
| Plus overnight sailings on all routes (not on fast ferries) |  |
| Condor Ferries The Quay Weymouth DT4 8DX Tel: 0845 345 2000 Fax: 01305 760 776 www.condorferries. co. uk  \* via Guernsey et Jersey \*\* via Jersey | Weymouth - Guernsey | 2 hours |
| Weymouth - Jersey | 3 hours 15 |
| Poole - St Malo\* | 5 hours 30 |
| Poole - Guernsey | 2 hours 30 |
| Poole - Jersey | 3 hours 45 |
| Guernsey - St Malo\*\* | 1 hours 45 |
| Jersey - St Malo | 1 hour 15 |
| Hoverspeed Fast Ferries International Hoverport Dover CT17 9TG Tel: 08705 240 241 Fax: 0870 4607 102 www.hoverspeed. co. uk | Dover - Calais (Seacat) | 45 minutes |
| Newhaven - Dieppe (Superseacat) | 2 hours |
| Norfolkline Eastern Dock Dover CT16 1JA Tel: 0870 870 1020 Fax: 0130 421 8415 www.norfolkline.com | Dover - Dunkerque | 2 hours |
| SpeedFerries Ltd.  209 East Camber Office Building Eastern Docks Dover, Kent CT16 1JA Tel: 08700 60 39 00 www.speedferries.com | Dover - Boulogne (Bookings from the 22 April) | 50 minutes |

You will find a list of French ports at the website http://www.mer. equipement. gouv. fr/commerce/01\_ports\_francais/02\_fiche\_identite/index. htm

House-boat

The Féderation des Industries Nautiques [association of companies in the boating trade groups together sea and river boat hire companies, and a list of them can be sent to you by request.

France has a particularly rich network of canals and rivers, 8,500km long, allowing you to discover the country in depth, as you slowly go along from lock to lock.

http://www.france-nautic.com/

You can also find information on the website http://www.vnf. fr

Navigating France: licences, river moorings, fuel…

A licence is needed to operate French motorised pleasure boats at sea where the actual horsepower of the engine or engines is/are higher than 4.5kW (6 HP). There are three types of licence:

la carte mer [sea licence]

le permis mer côtier [coastal licence]

le permis mer hauturier [deep-sea/ocean licence]

There are specific licences for navigating on inland waters.

Licences to operate motorised pleasure boats at sea only give the right to pilot by agreement. Any person operating a pleasure boat professionally must have the recognised professional qualifications.

The regulations are on http://www.mer. equipement. gouv. fr/

Port authorities display daily weather bulletins and forecasts for the following days.

At the French sailing association's website, you can consult tide tables for each port.

http://www.ffvoile.org/

## Taxis, Subways, Buses, Commuting Boats

Taxis

You can take them from taxi ranks (indicated by a square sign with Taxi in white on a blue background) or hail one in the street (on condition that it is available: the "Taxi" sign on the roof is then fully lit, and the small lights under the sign are switched off).

Some taxi companies:

Taxi G7: 33 (0) 1 47 39 47 39

Taxis Bleus: 0 891 70 10 10 (€0.22/min)

Aéro Taxi (for airport destinations): 33 (0) 1 47 39 01 47

01 Taxi: 33 (0) 1 49 17 01 01

Alpha Taxi: 33 (0) 1 45 85 85 85

To find out about taxi charges throughout France consult the 'tariffs' section of the website http://www.artisan-taxi.com

Taxis are only allowed to pick up from ranks (station de taxi) and you should always check they have a meter. The fare depends on the price and on the pick-up and the price per km.

If your ride takes you out of town and for transfers from airports, check with the driver before starting.

When called to pick up passengers, taxis add the cost of that journey to the fare. Extra fees for baggage, animals or a fourth person are routine.

Tipping is customary but completely at your discretion; generally 10% to 15% is acceptable.

Several towns in France and also Paris have metro or tram systems and most offer a fairly comprehensive bus network. These means of transport serve the town centers and inner suburbs. Fast and economical, they are the most practical worry-free way to discover a town. In Paris the metro is by far the quickest and most practical way of getting about 15 lines and around 300 stations. The service usually starts around 5.30am and ends around 12.30am. Numerous connections with the RER (Regional express network) and the SNCF railway stations allow easy travel to the suburbs.

SNCF Line (Paris outskirts): a ticket purchased from the outskirts to a Paris railway station now also includes travel on the Paris métro and bus.

Métro 1 metro or bus ticket: €1.30. Paris and its outskirts are divided into zones. There are 8 different zones; you can ask for a map of these zones at any metro and RER station, they are available for free.1 Book or 10 tickets carnet: €9.60. Half price €4.80 for children from 4-10 years. Free under 4.

Simple and safe, the Paris metro runs daily from 5.30am to 12.30pm. Keep your ticket handy; you may be asked to show it to a transit inspector, and tickets are sometimes needed to exit Metro turnstiles.

Basic Paris Visite Passes-good for unlimited travel on Metro, bus and RER suburban train lines-are available for one (€8), two (€14), three (€18) and five (€27) days; Paris Visite Passes that extend to the airports, Disneyland-Paris and Versailles are €17, €27, €38 and €46.

Passes can be purchased at airports; the Paris Convention & Visitors Bureau; Metro, RER and railway stations; and in the US (ask your travel agent or tour operator). www.ratp. fr

Buses: 1 ticket is now sufficient to cover any bus journey within Paris (as on the métro). In the outskirts the longest lines only require a maximum of 2 tickets. Generally, buses operate from 5.30am to 8.30pm. At night the Noctambus connects the centre of Paris (Place du Châtelet amongst others) and the suburbs.

You can ask for a map of the network (metro, bus, RER) at metro or RER stations (issued free).

Information on regional and Paris transport: www.ratp. fr

Batobus (Tour-Boat Shuttle) From April to October, the city of Paris operates a boat service on the Seine river called Batobus, with stops at the Eiffel Tower, Musee D’Orsay, Saint - Germain-des-pres (Quai Malaquais, on the left Bank and opposite the Louvre), Notre-Dame, Hotel de Ville, Louvre and Champs-Elysees. The fare is €3.50 for one stop, €2 for each additional stop, €10 for an all-day pass (€5.50 for children under 12); €12.50 for a two-day pass (€6.50 for children 12). For information about Batobus, visit http://www.batobus.com/.

The RER The five lines (A, B, C, D and E) of the RER (Regional express network) cross Paris and the Ile-de-France during the same times as the metro.

Please note that outside Paris ticket charges are not the same.

Ask at your departure station for information.

For tourists: Paris Visit Ticket is valid for either 1,2,3 or 5 consecutive days and allows unlimited travel in all zones of the whole network (metro, bus, RER) and on the Montmartre Funicular.

Reduced price for children aged between 4 and 11 years old.

COACHES

Eurolines is the largest operator of scheduled coach services, offering regular services to over 65 destinations from London. These include Avignon, Bordeaux, Grenoble, Marseilles, Nantes, Paris (up to 4 services daily), Perpignan, St Malo, Strasbourg, Toulouse et Tours. Prices start at just £33 return. Connexions are available from around 1200 UK cities on National Express.

## Accommodation

## Hotels in France

Tourist hotels are approved and examined by the authorities. They are split into 5 categories according to their facilities, areas and services. The categories are 1-star, 2-star, 3-star, 4-star and - for hotels of great comfort - 4-star L (luxury). Prices displayed outside the hotel and in bedrooms must be inclusive. They are unregulated and a surcharge can be levied for an extra bed or for breakfast. Rooms must usually be left by noon on the day of departure. There are about 17,500 hotels, inns and motels in France.

Finding a Room

It's always easier to reserve your accommodation through a travel agent before coming to France. You can also contact local Tourist Offices or the Syndicats d'Initiative: they will inform you on the local possibilities of accommodation.

Hotel Chains

There are dozens of hotel chains and reservation services for hotels in France which group standardized hotels or hotels each with its own character. The range covers all categories, from 'Relais & Chateaux', 'Chateaux et Hotels de France' hotels (3 - and 4-star) or more economical hotels near major cities (Hotel Formule 1, Etap Hotel, Balladins, Bonsaï, Liberté, Première Classe). Hotel chains usually have central reservation facilities.

Rates Quoted for per night for a single or double room. Rates are quoted per person if they include room and board. Hotels include taxes and service.

Reservations

Reservations should be in writing (letter, fax or email). At that time, an advance deposit should be sent to the hotel. Your reservation, room rate and receipt of deposit should be confirmed in writing, by the hotelier. To avoid problems, reservations should never be made orally.

Deposits An advance deposit is required to secure your reservation. The exact amount is not fixed by law but, in general, the deposit amounts to the equivalent of 25% of the total cost and one night for shorter stays.

Whatever the type of accommodation you choose, pay a deposit. The deposit will not be refunded unless the contract stipulates it. If the hotel cancels your reservation, he must pay you the double of the deposit.

Arrival Time

Guests are expected to arrive at their hotel no later than between 7 and 10 pm. To avoid misunderstandings, it is best to let the hotel keeper know the approximate arrival time, especially if it might be late. If you a telephone reservation has been made without a deposit, the hotelier is not required to hold the room after 7 pm.

Cancellations The French Civil Code, Article 1590, regulates the rights of hotel guests and hoteliers regarding cancellation. In addition, many hotels follow stipulations laid down by the international Hotel Convention. Be sure to request details of the hotel's cancellation policy along with the reservation confirmation.

ON-THE-SPOT Reservations

Passengers who want to book accommodations upon arrival may consult the Automatic Central Reservations Board in Roissy-Charles-de-Gaulle Airport.

Reservations can be made for the day of arrival at the Syndicats d'Initiative or Tourist Offices in Paris and other cities.

At a campsite

France offers more than 9,000 fully equipped campsites officially grated from 0 to 4\* and 2,300 farm campsites. The Official Campsite Guide is on sale at bookshops, newsagents, FNAC [national chain of department stores selling books, CDs, computers …] and all good retailers, as well as by mail order (postage and carriage: 3 euro per copy).

Fédération Française de Camping-Caravaning [French Camping and Caravanning Association] (tel +33 (0) 1 42 72 84 08). http://www.campingfrance.com

Camping off-site is permitted with the authorization of the landowner, but prohibited on beaches, roadsides or at designated sites.

For information, please ask at Tourist Offices or the Gendarmerie.

In tourist apartments

These are buildings housing apartments for rent, fully equipped and with a choice of hotel services.

Visit the website www.snrt. fr

In furnished accommodation

These are fully equipped holiday villas or apartments for rent to tourists: information from Tourist Offices and estate agents.

In Gîtes or Guest Houses

By renting a room in the owner's home (per night or per week, with breakfast and, occasionally with evening meal), you will have the chance to discover more about, and share in, the French way of life. www.gites-de-france. fr

In Holiday Villages

Non-profit making organizations who offer especially designed accommodation for families and groups, the holidays Villages also have excellent leisure activities. A stay in a holiday village is a great way to meet French people in a friendly environment and at the same time keep a feeling of individual freedom.

## Catering

On holiday we like the simple outdoor life, we like to live out of doors, eat our meals in the sunshine and sip our wine under a clear sky counting shooting stars until the early hours. Not a very practical proposition in Britain, that's why we spend our summers with our VW camper in France

When holidaying for three or four weeks at a time, what to eat becomes an important issue and over the last ten years initially with two young children and latterly on our own we have learnt a few things and our experiences may be of benefit to other members. To loosely plan for meals for about 30 days takes a bit of thought and initial preparation. You may like to eat out in restaurants but this could be costly over the time of the holiday. Anyway I don’t enjoy eating in restaurants, I don’t feel relaxed and most people in them smoke cigarettes.

For a start, for a couple of months before the holiday, my wife will buy a few extra tins each week with her normal shopping and save them in a box ready to take. Whilst we would not normally eat tinned stuff, for a holiday they can be very convenient e. g. carrots, peas, fruit, salmon, tuna, potatoes etc. As tins are used up they leave storage space to hold bottles of wine for the return trip!

Although the van fridge has only a small freezer compartment it is surprising how many pieces of steak it can hold if rolled up tightly. The fridge can be stocked up with food and on the shorter sea crossing Dover to Calais (or the tunnel of course) when the gas is turned off the fridge will not have time to defrost.

Breakfast is easy, you can take plenty of cereal and on most camp sites you can buy croissants each morning from the camp shop, a visiting bread van or from a nearby shop. We usually buy a baguette to eat later with our lunch although these do not keep more than a few hours. Cereals that you buy in Britain are now sold in many French supermarkets.

We normally only have a snack at lunchtime. For French people it is the main meal of the day and they go to town on it but for us, at the hottest time of the day, a snack is sufficient. We would have something with our baguette, cheese, jam, ham or something like tinned salmon and perhaps a pain-o-chocolat or chausson pomme bought freshly made from a Patisserie to go with it.

The evening meal is the main meal of our day and we enjoy a few glasses of wine to go with it. We always drink red wine as not only have we developed a taste for it but it is difficult to keep white wine chilled. We take a five or ten litre container with us and look out for shops which advertise Vin en Vrac which means that they sell wine loose. You take your container into one of these shops and there will usually be a range of large tanks full of different wines. No need to choose the most expensive variety just ask to taste (Je degust Silvousplia) one of the local names or Van de Pays. A first taste will not always give a good impression and it may taste a little bitter but do not worry, as long as you can drink it in the shop then it will be OK. Pay 6-8 Francs per litre, there is no need to pay extra to get 12%+, 11-11.5% will be adequate. This wine is very young and has to be to be drunk soon and should be warm. Keep an empty wine bottle for your table and fill it from your container, this way you will know how much you drink for it goes down so smoothly that you could unwittingly overdo it! Don’t make any attempt to chill the wine but allow it to maintain the same temperature as the air in this way you will enjoy it. Don’t be put off by the price of this wine, we have entertained many a wine buff at our van who has been impressed with it and surprised when told of it’s origin!

To make things easy we like to barbecue. We used to have a small home made collapsible barbecue which used charcoal and was very good. However many camp sites in France forbid the use of these barbecues because they might be in forest areas or constitute a general fire risk. Consequently we bought a gas barbecue and these appear to be acceptable on all sites although it is always best check at the reception first. We have found the gas barbecue with lava rocks to be most convenient to use, There are no lighting problems or hot ashes to get rid of, you just switch on when you need it and off when finished. The food cooked is much the same as that from a charcoal grill as fat from the food will drip on the hot lava rock and burn off to give the taste. It is my job to operate the barbecue so it makes easier for my wife as we share the cooking.

Our basic evening meal would be meat or fish, potatoes and vegetables, a sweet and coffee.

Buying Meat

For meat, after we have used up our own supplies, we will buy meat from a supermarket, butchers or market. French lamb chops are really good, in the supermarket you can point to these across the counter and indicate how many you want. In the butchers shop it is more interesting as you will have to ask in French. French butchers like to talk to everyone and pass the time of day so you don’t have to be in a hurry. In some shops the butcher will cut and wrap your order and you will pay for it at a separate counter. Lamb is agnau (arnoo) so you ask for so many cote du agnau, the cost will be similar to that in Britain.

Beef is buef and there are a few different cuts so if you say is is for a barbecue the butcher will point out the choices. Say how many pieces you want and give an indication of how much weight. A half kilogramme (demi kilo), about 1lb. would be enough for two people and cost about £5.

For children you can buy beefburgers with the familiar brand names as in Britain. These are usually more expensive than at home but are better quality and do not drip fat all over the barbecue.

Chipolata sausages are quite tasty although fatty and can be bought by weight in the butchers or pre-packed in the supermarket.

We have noticed that the German supermarket chain Aldi have opened up in France and these are very cheap if you like the brands they sell.

We sometimes buy a ready cooked chicken, the roasting machines are very popular in France. One of these will last us for a couple of meals or a half (Demi pouli) for one meal.

You can also buy food in the many local markets. The hygene may sometimes be suspect so take care, we have never suffered any ill effects!

Fish.

We have bought fish from fishmongers in the local indoor market. We have not been too sure what the fish was but picked out some that looked good and asked for enough for two. We have even been given a free taste of smoked salmon!.

Fruit and Vegatables.

Buy vegetables from the markets etc the same way as you do at home. We find that melons are very tasty and one will last us for two meals. Sweet corn is very good on the barbeque but is not in season in France until later. Sometimes you can find it on the larger markets and if you can it is worth buying.

Cooking.

We rarely bother with starters so straight into the main meal. As I mentioned earlier we use our gas barbecue almost every day to cook our meat or fish. The gas is lighted and the barbecue allowed to heat up for about five minutes during which time a glass of ‘chef’s wine’ is poured and sampled. If you have some swwet corn, one cob cut in two serve two people, start thise off first as they take about fifteen minutes turning them frequently. Corn starts as a pale cream colour and as it cooks it changes to a dark yellow. To cook our beef steak we pepper it well and lay it on the grill over the hot rocks. I note the time, usually using the clock on my bicycle computer, that it takes for the blood to ooze to the surface of the steak. Then the steak is turned over and cooked for the same time again. This produces a medium done steak and we find it too our liking. Lamb chops can be cooked similarly but using plenty of Herbs of Provence rather than pepper.

For fish we have used a fish basket or just laid them on the grill. They cook very quickly and the time varies with the type of fish. Whole fish (less head and tails) are easier to handle than filleted and five minutes a side is a good starting guide.

Whilst the meat is cooking my wife will prepare the veg and salad. Salad will be fresh but the veg would be from a tin and heated on the gas cooker.

When the barbecue has done it’s stuff it is just switched off and when cool can be put away.

Potatoes can be peeled and boiled but we are on holiday so a tin of new potatoes heated up and served with a knob of butter is quite adequate. The majority of camp sites sell chips so whilst the barbecue is going we take a bowl to the caf頰lace and buy a portion of chips (some tricky timing involved here). We have found that often you are given more than enough for two if you buy only one portion. The chips vary between sites from the frozen variety to properly cut and cooked potatoes. For a change my wife will sometimes take tinned or fresh potatoes, slice them up and fry them in oil. These make a good and cheaper alternative to bought chips.

Mash made from dehydrated potatoes served with butter, a few slices of corned beef and baked beans I find a delicious quick meal but my wife will only eat it under sufferance!

For sweets we often have melon as mentioned above, tinned fruit or cake with tinned cream. Sometimes if our freezer compartment will take it, we buy a carton of ice cream from the supermarket to have with our sweet.

All this makes for the minimum of washing up. We put all our plates in the washup bowl, add a squirt of washup liquid and off to the camp dish washing sinks. We never struggle with the washing bowl in our van.

Our evenings are usually rounded off relaxing under the stars with a glass of wine, can’t wait now until we go again!

## 2. Tourist industry in France

Your trip to France is certain to be one of the most memorable and treasured vacations you've ever undertaken, but - like any trip to a foreign land - it always helps to be well prepared for the adventure. Here we've provided a wealth of addresses, resources, and links to explore - which will help you plan your itineraries and assure a smooth trip.

Banking & Money Questions

Currency Converter

Use this handy form, provided courtesy of xe.com, to instantly translate your choice of denominations between any two national currencies.

Euro Monetary Standard (in French only)

Although French workers started receiving their paychecks in Euros as early as July 1, 2001, the introduction of Euro coins and bills began in earnest on January 1, 2002. According to the French government, payments in Francs ceased altogether at midnight on February 17, 2002.

How Much Money Should I Bring?

Thomas Cook has prepared a handy chart which suggests average daily expenses for key cities throughout the world, based on 3-star and 4-star accommodations, including meals, sightseeing, and incidentals. (Requires Acrobat Reader plug-in, free from Adobe)

Mastercard ATM Locator

Need quick cash? With more than 820,000 locations worldwide, you're never far from a MasterCard® / Maestro® / Cirrus® ATM.

Prepaid or Stored Value Travel Cards

For 24-hour secure access to cash, one option to consider is AAA Global Currency, a prepaid Visa card valid at any of 556,000 ATMs and 600,000 merchants worldwide. Available at participating AAA offices.

Visa ATM Locator

Our search located 99 ATMs in Paris honoring Visa® and Plus® cards. The locator permits international searches by region, country, city, street address, or postal code.

Words to the Wise

About.com's Europe for Visitors guide offers tips on using European automated tellers. Includes information on exchange rates, transaction fees, acceptable PINs (personal identification numbers), and back-up strategies to keep you liquid throughout your trip.

French Consulates

Consulates - Passport & Visa Info

Directory of 12 French Consulates serving different regions in the U. S., 6 offices in Canada, plus nearly 190 European and International offices. Passport and visa requirements (based on your citizenship) for entry into France, Monaco, and overseas departments.

American Embassy & Consulates in France

The American Embassy is located in Paris (2, avenue Gabriel, 75008; phone [33] 1-43-12-22-22), and is complemented by consulates in Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon, Marseille, Rennes, Strasbourg, and Toulouse. Consular officials are responsible for protecting the interests of American nationals abroad, be they permanent residents or temporary visitors.

Automobiles (Importing into France)

Bringing a U. S. - made or Canadian vehicle into France may be subject to customs duties and a 19.6% VAT (value added tax), payable at the port of entry. Since most vehicles will not conform to strict French safety and environmental standards, necessary modifications are likely to be expensive. A French registration must be obtained within 4 months, and if the auto does not pass muster, it must be re-exported. There are certain exemptions to the customs duties and VAT for tourists staying less than 185 days in a calendar year, or for those establishing their permanent residence in France.

British Embassy in France

The British Embassy is located at 35, rue du Faubourg St-Honoré, 75383 Paris Cedex 08. Phone: (33) 1-44-51-31-00. The British Consulate-General is located at 18bis, rue d'Anjou, 75008 Paris (all mail should be sent to the British Embassy, Paris). Phone: (33) 1-44-51-31-00.

Canadian Embassy in France

The Canadian Embassy is located at 35, avenue Montaigne, 75008 Paris. Phone: (33) 1-44-43-29-00. Métro: Franklin D. Roosevelt (or) Alma Marceau. Hours of operation: 9: 00 a. m. - 12 noon and 2: 00 - 5: 00 p. m.

Counterfeit Goods

Imports into - and exports out of - France of counterfeit goods violating trademarks (and/or copyrights, patents, industrial designs, etc) are offenses under French general Criminal Law, and such goods are deemed to be "prohibited" under French Customs Law - even if declared to a Customs official. Violations are subject to a term of imprisonment from 2 to 5 years, and fines up to 1 million French francs, plus confiscation of the goods themselves and any conveyances in which they are found (such as a vehicle, vessel or aircraft). While this might not appear relevant to the average honest tourist, even bootlegged copies of music tapes and CDs could be construed as a violation; hence, caution is advised when packing for your trip.

Currency or Monetary Instruments

Although there is no restriction on the total amount of money brought into or out of France, anyone carrying more than 50,000 French francs (or its equivalent) in any form must file a Report of International Transportation of Currency or Monetary Instrument ("déclaration de sommes, titres et valeurs").

English Speaking Doctors

Medical emergencies can be compounded if the patient and practitioner cannot communicate effectively. Fortunately, the U. S. Embassy in Paris has prepared this list of anglophone hospitals, pharmacies, and physicians - grouped by medical specialty - for Paris, Bordeaux, Lyon, and other locations in France.

Firearms & Ammunition

France has stringent regulations on firearms and ammunition. As a rule, firearms which have no legitimate sporting or recreational use are not permitted entry into France.

Fodor's Personal Trip Planner

This unique site allows you to custom-tailor your destination and travel needs, then print out a report of traveling requirements, recommendations and tips.

France Discovery Guide

The French Government Tourist Office publishes a new edition annually of this colorful and informative magazine. Request your own free copy, or information on any region of France, using this form.

French Customs & Excise Taxes on Purchases

As a visitor to France you may be able to claim a tax refund (on Value Added Tax, or VAT) for eligible goods you take home. Some merchants participate in the program at the point of purchase (duty-free shops), while in other cases you can apply to receive the refund by mail. Requirements and paperwork are rather stringent, and should be initiated prior to leaving France. Residents of the EEC are not eligible.

Gifts Mailed To France

Private individuals in France may receive, free of duty and taxes, a gift (for personal use, at no cost to the recipient) mailed from a foreign country, if the total shipment's value (item value + shipping cost + insurance) does not exceed €45. Gifts that exceed this amount will be subject to duty and taxes based upon their entire value; there is no €45 deduction for gifts sent from abroad. The Postal form CN22 (available in any U. S. Post Office) should be filled out by the sender, then joined to the package.

Maps

We recommend that you invest in a few good maps before departing on your trip, particularly if you plan a foray into the provinces. Baedeker and Michelin publish excellent editions specific to various regions, while Fodor offers the world standard for informative travel guides. If you wish to print out a free neighborhood map showing the streets around your hotel, or the public transit systems of Paris, visit our page on Free Stuff. In Paris, most neighborhoods also offer wonderful billboard maps at major intersections and métro stations.

Meat & Dairy Products

As a rule, you can only bring small quantities of these products into France (1 to 2 kilograms - i. e.2.2 to 4.4 pounds - where applicable), provided they are not prohibited or otherwise restricted.

Medicine

No permit is required for personal medicines carried in your luggage, but you should have with you the prescription dispensed by your practitioner. Customs officials must be satisfied that you are not importing more than would be necessary for your personal use, taking into account the drug type and length of stay (for no more than 3 months). It is suggested that you do NOT transfer prescription drugs into an unmarked container, but keep them in the original prescription bottle. If you plan to import medications for personal use by mail or by express shipment, an Import Permit is required.

Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances

Needless to say, narcotics and dangerous drugs (including cannabis products and derivatives) are prohibited entry into France; violators face stiff prison sentences and fines. If you are traveling to France and need to use prescription-type psychotherapeutic drugs for medical purposes, refer to Medicine (above).

Pets

There are limits on the number (and ages) of pets which may be brought into France, including birds, cats, dogs, reptiles, rodents and other species. Vaccination requirements are stringent. Be aware that France observes the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, with respect to both live flora and fauna as well as any products or articles manufactured from them.

Photography: Take Travel Pictures Like a Pro! Author and photographer Jeff Wignall offers up nearly 100 easy-to-follow tips, with accompanying photos, covering every aspect of travel photography.

Plants and Plant Products There are prohibitions and restrictions on plants and plant products imported into France. As a rule, these should be presented at the port of entry, for inspection by officers of the Plant Health Inspection Service ("contrôle phytosanitaire").

Restrooms All cafés are required by law to let the public use their bathrooms, although this doesn't necessarily mean that they will be pleasant about it (you may also have to pay a few francs to use the toilet). Bathrooms are often located downstairs. Your best bet may be fast-food chains. You can also find pay-per-use toilet units on the street.

Seasonal Residents Non-residents of the European Union who inherit, buy, build or rent (on a two-year lease or longer) a permanent structure in France to use as a seasonal residence, may have a one-time opportunity to furnish the residence with certain goods free of customs duties, although such items will still be subject to VAT (value added tax).

Settling in France Foreign nationals establishing permanent residence in France may import personal effects and furnishings without paying customs duty or VAT (value added tax), as long as they can prove having lived outside the European Union during the previous 12 months, and provide a detailed, itemized list of possessions owned longer than 6 months.

Studying in France

If enrolled as a student in a French academic institution, one may import personal effects, household goods (including computer), furnishings, and one motor vehicle without paying customs duty or VAT (value added tax), provided all such items are re-exported upon leaving France (may not be sold or otherwise disposed of in France). A list (in duplicate) must document all items, and proof of acceptance by a French school is required.

Telephones

Everything you need to know about local and international telephone service, directory information, telegraph and Minitel services in Paris and throughout France.

Tips on Tipping

Visitors to France will appreciate this handy guide, which suggests how much to tip hairdressers, hotel personnel, restaurant staff, taxi drivers, theater ushers, and tour guides for their services.

Transportation Guide

Consult this page for details on all forms of transportation to and from - as well as within - France. Includes info on air travel, auto routes, bicycling, boats, buses, car rentals, railways, subway (métro), etc.

Travelers' Allowances

Residents of the U. S. and Canada traveling to France may import items free of customs duties or VAT (value added tax), limited to a value of 1200 FF (age 15+) or 600 FF (age <15 years), subject to certain restrictions on tobacco, alcohol, perfumes, and other products.

Travel Preparations

Arthur Frommer offers a series of helpful articles, with tips on what to do and pack before leaving home, reasons for carrying as little cash as possible, the most essential travel accessories, and more.

U. S. Consulate Information

Check this site for tips on crime, updated travel advisories and worldwide terrorist activities. Particularly useful are the cautions about avoiding pickpockets, organized rings of thieves, and coercive marketing practices by some entertainment establishments.

Welcoming Disabled Persons

In the past few years, much has been done to welcome individuals with disabilities who wish to visit France, with respect to accommodations, transportation, parking, phones, recreation, access to public venues, etc.

France remains the most popular vacation destination in the world, with over 77 million incoming arrivals in 2002.

French nationals still prefer to vacation in France. Despite the strength of the euro, over 90% of French trips were domestic trips within France.

In 2003, Prime Minister Jean Pierre Raffarin convened the first inter-ministerial meeting on tourism in 20 years. Scheduled to become an annual meeting, its goal is to support and promote the tourism industry, particularly in light of the difficulties which began in large part with the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US, and which continued with the military action in Iraq in 2003, as well as other events such as the SARS outbreak in Southeast Asia.

Though long-haul tourist arrivals were down in 2002 and 2003, European visitors remained plentiful, mitigating to some extent the effects on the French travel and tourism industry of the 11 September attacks, military conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the SARS outbreak.

Travel accommodation has had a difficult time, as the events of 11 September caused a number of cancellations. The difficult operating environment, coupled with the decisions of many domestic travellers to stay with family and friends, has exacerbated the situation.

The devastating drought and extreme heat of summer 2003 affected the tourism industry, due to cancellations.

The failures of the small airlines Air Lib and Air Littoral consolidated Air France’s domination of the French skies, aided by its September 2003 decision to merge with KLM.

The success of the TGV continues through the Paris/Marseilles link and a faster link between Paris and London. The New Paris/Strasbourg link projected for 2007/2008 should continue to boost sales.

Car rental has suffered from the lack of foreign tourists, though domestic and inter-European rentals have remained strong. Increasing price competition has been a major issue as budget groups like ADA and easyCar make inroads.

The travel retail sector has still not recovered since the 11 September attacks in New York and Washington. Cancellations continue after further terrorist attacks and military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq.

PR campaigns to bring US tourists back to France after the diplomatic tension between the two countries were not sufficient to bring levels of incoming travel back to normal.

Tourist attractions in France should remain strong, given the diversity of attractions ranging from theme parks to world class museums.

Although this is clearly a difficult period for the French tourist industry, officials hope for recovery by the end of 2004, as long as major economies like the US and Japan continue to improve.

As a whole, the French tourist industry is likely to continue growing. French officials expect increasing numbers of tourists from China and South America to help fuel this growth.

## Conclusion

France possesses a large variety of landscapes, ranging from coastal plains in the north and west, where France borders the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, to the mountain ranges in the south (the Pyrenees) and the southeast (the Alps), of which the latter contains the highest point of Europe, the Mont Blanc at 4810 m.

In between are found other elevated regions such as the Massif Central or the Vosges mountains and extensive river basins such as those of the Loire River, the Rhone River, the Garonne and Seine.

France's economy combines extensive private enterprise with substantial, but declining, government intervention. Large tracts of fertile land, the application of modern technology, and subsidies have combined to make France the leading agricultural producer in Western Europe.

The government retains considerable influence over key segments of infrastructure sectors, with majority ownership of railway, electricity, aircraft, and telecommunication firms. It has been gradually relaxing its control over these sectors since the early 1990s. The government is slowly selling off holdings in France Telecom, in Air France, and in the insurance, banking, and defense industries.

France joined 10 other EU members to launch the euro on January 1, 1999, with euro coins and banknotes completely replacing the French franc in early 2002.

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