FRANCE

Region: Western Europe
Official Language: French
Population: 64.4 million (French National Institute of Statistics Estimate 2010)
Currency: Euro (EUR)
Area (metropolitan France*): 543,965 sq km
Area (overseas departments): 88,794 sq km
Capital: Paris
Number of States: 95 départements in metropolitan France*, 4 overseas départements, and 7 overseas collectivités (territories)
Government: Presidential-parliamentary Republic
Religion: 64% Catholic, 25% atheist/agnostic, 7% Muslim, 3% Protestant, 1% Jewish

*Metropolitan France (France métropolitaine or la Métropole, or colloquially l’Hexagone) is the part of France located in Europe, including Corsica. By contrast, Overseas France (la France d’outre-mer or colloquially les DOM-TOM) is the collective name for the French overseas departments (départements d’outre-mer or DOM), territories (territoires d’outre-mer or TOM), and collectivities (collectivités d’outre-mer or COM).
## ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This booklet has been designed to assist students of The University of Queensland who are planning to go on exchange to France through the UQ Abroad program. It contains practical, cultural and language-related information that is relevant to students.

For ease of reference some information in this booklet has been marked with symbols in highlight boxes:

- **Important tips.**
- **Interesting or unusual facts.**
- **Web links to relevant information.**
- **Glossaries and language information.**

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WEATHER
France has four types of weather (oceanic, mountain, continental, Mediterranean) and four distinct seasons.

Winters are generally cold and summers mild. However, along the Mediterranean winters are mild and summers hot; and in the mountains very cold winters can be followed by dry hot summers. Depending on where you are and the season, temperatures can go as low as minus 10 or as high as the mid 30s, so plan an assortment of clothing for the different seasons.

TIPPING
Attitudes toward tipping vary, depending on financial means. Although travellers guides will tell you to tip, tipping has become less common in France, especially amongst students. It is only practised occasionally if the service is particularly good or out of the ordinary. So don’t feel obliged to tip if you are on a tight budget.

PUBLIC REST ROOMS
There are relatively few public toilets on city streets (there are some automated ones in Paris which charge for admission), but you can find rest rooms in most cafés and restaurants, in some parks, and in many large department stores.

TIME
France uses Central European Standard Time (CET or CEDT) and Central European Summer Time (Daylight Savings Time - DST). DST starts on the last Sunday in March at 2:00am, and ends on the last Sunday in October at 3:00am.

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR GENERAL FACTS AND INFORMATION ABOUT FRANCE:
- France Keys: www.francekeys.com
- The Internet Gateway to France: www.france-pub.com
- France Wikipedia Article: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France

Currency Converter: www.xe.com

DRINKING WATER
Tap water and bottled water are widely consumed in France. In restaurants you usually have the option of tap water, still water, or sparkling water. If you don’t ask for a bottle of eau minérale you are likely to be given tap water (eau du robinet).

Current weather and forecasts for France: www.weatherforecastmap.com/france

http://france.meteofrance.com
PRACTICAL TIPS

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

France is well served by a world-class public transport system. Aside from Paris with its 300 metro stations, buses, trams, and public bicycle service; every major city has a comprehensive bus and subway network and most towns offer a good and reliable bus service.

STUDENT TICKETS

Your carte d'étudiant (student card) will often give you access to discounted prices on public transport, so be sure to get one from your host university when you arrive in France, and keep it with you when travelling.

TRAINS

With their main, TGV and regional line networks, SNCF (the state owned train company) can take you almost anywhere in France. High-speed trains (TGV) reach large cities, while regional trains go to all corners of France and are an excellent way to see the countryside.

Some tips on booking train tickets:

• Try to book far in advance to get the best price.
• The SNCF website can be tricky to navigate, so don’t leave checking train routes till the last minute.
• Label your luggage, otherwise it will be processed as abandoned luggage if you lose it.
• SNCF offers a variety of discount cards for students.
• On Tuesdays you can get some tickets at half price.
• There are good fares such as the Prems, the Piccolo, and the Piccolissimo.

When taking a train don’t forget to validate (‘composter’) your ticket at one of the machines before getting on the train. If you don’t, you will have to pay a fine to the train inspector (‘contrôleur’).

• There are also the Bons Plans du Net discounted tickets and, sometimes, Dernière Minute tickets, which are sold at a reduced price at the last minute.

METROS, TRAMS AND BUSES

Check the local city council website for information on metros, trams, and bus services in your area.

BICYCLES

Bicycles are becoming an increasingly popular way to get around in cities. You can hire bicycles easily and bike parking facilities are available in most major cities.

TAXIS

Don’t sit in the front passenger seat of a taxi (for safety reasons it is not allowed). Surcharges apply at night.

Your student card often entitles you to public transport discounts, however this may not always be the case in Paris and some larger cities.

SOME LOW FARE AIRLINES

Airberlin - www.airberlin.com
Air Europa - www.aireuropa.com
Aerlingus - www.aerlingus.com
BMI Baby - www.bmibaby.com
Condor - www.condor.com
Easyjet - www.easyjet.com
FlyOnAir - www.flyonair.it
Germanwings - www.germanwings.com
Jet2 - www.jet2.com
Ryan Air - www.ryanair.com

FLIGHT COMPARISON WEBSITES

Billet Moins Cher - www.billetmoinscher.com
Skyscanner - www.skyscanner.com
Avion Bas Prix - www.avionbasprix.com
Expedia - www.expedia.com
France is a republic with a dual executive system of government that combines elements of both parliamentary (like Britain) and presidential (like the US) systems. The President is elected as head of state by the French people, and he appoints the Prime Minister and a council of ministers. Both the Prime Minister and the President exercise the executive power. The legislative power is vested in the Parliament, which is made up of two separate law-making assemblies: the Assemblée nationale (the lower house), made up of popularly elected representatives from different political parties; and the Sénat (the upper house), made up of representatives elected by the collège électoral (a group of municipal councillors from all of the states).

LAW

French laws are similar to those of Australia, however here are some to be aware of as they may differ:

- You need to carry some form of ID (preferably your passport – le passeport) at all times. French police can ask you for identification at any time.
- The use or display of any Nazi symbols, salutes, songs or material (e.g. flags, memorabilia) is illegal.
- You can be fined for defacing or affronting the tricolour national symbol (the French Flag).
- The legal minimum age to purchase alcohol is 18.
- The legal blood alcohol limit for all drivers, whatever their age and driving experience is 0.05%.

SAFETY

While France has low rates of violent crime, a limited number of neighbourhoods in the larger French cities merit extra caution. Some cities publish pamphlets regarding safety advice. In case of concerns or problems you should approach the police.

More information on the French political system: www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/215768/France (select ‘government’)

Laws regarding Internet downloading in France: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HADOPI_law


Cars and bicycles - Familiarise yourself with the French code de la route (road rules) before driving and cycling. Cyclists can and do get fined for offences. Be mindful of cyclists when driving.

Look Left! - Traffic travels on the right-hand side of the road in France, so remember to look left first when crossing the street.

When Out at Night - If you are in a large city consider asking a local which suburbs and areas to avoid visiting alone or at night.

Passports and Tickets - Keep photocopies or scans of your passport and travel documents in a safe place in case of loss or theft.

Credit Cards - Write down your card number and relevant information and keep it in a safe place. If you lose the card, you can cancel it easily.

For emergency phone numbers go to page 13
PRACTICAL TIPS

PHONING
Phoning France From Australia:
0011 + 33 + Area Code*(without the 0) + Phone Number
* France is divided into 8 areas
Phoning Australia from France:
00 + 61 + State Code (without the 0) + Phone Number

USING A MOBILE PHONE IN FRANCE
Using your Australian mobile in France is likely to be expensive and requires international roaming. If you want to use a mobile phone, there are cheaper options:
• Buy an Australian power board and take it with you. This way you only need one adaptor to charge or use several of your Australian appliances at once.
• To find out if your existing mobile will work with a French SIM card visit: http://www.planetomni.com/FAQ_gsm.shtml

THE MAIN FRENCH PHONE SERVICE PROVIDERS
• Orange (France Telecom) www.orange.com/en_EN/
• SFR www.sfr.fr
• Bouygues Telecom www.bouyguestelecom.fr

ELECTRICITY
France uses plugs with two round prongs - these plugs are used across most of continental Europe. French outlets emit the same voltage as Australian outlets, so you only need an adaptor (not a voltage transformer) to use your Australian appliances.
French powerpoints don’t have on/off switches – they are permanently on.

The websites that compare French mobile phone plans:
www.meilleurmobile.com/comparateur
www.operateurs-telephonique.com

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS
112 Europe-wide emergency services number
15 Ambulance / emergency medical care (SAMU)
17 Police / Gendarmerie
18 Fire Department (les pompiers)
3624 SOS Médecin 24/7 medical service - NOT an emergency service. You will have to pay at the time of the visit.
1010 Operator
118 012 International directory assistance
118 712 France directory assistance
01 47 23 80 80 English speaking help line
01 40 59 33 00 Australian Embassy France

Australian Embassy France website: www.france.embassy.gov.au
CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

It is important not to view a person as a stereotype of a culture, but rather as an individual that is influenced by the values of the culture or cultures in which they grew up. If you understand and respect these cultural values, it is easier to avoid misunderstanding and conflict.

TRAIN

Outside of the cities, there are only a few passenger trains in Mexico and these are primarily scenic tourist routes. These trains are a great way to see some of Mexico’s impressive countryside. The Chihuahua Pacific Railway provides a great view of sites along the Copper Canyon.

CULTURAL VALUES

Cultures often have different values or customs in relation to the following:

• Social hierarchies and authority.
• Family and family responsibilities.
• The degree of formality/informality required in different social situations.
• The importance of the individual as opposed to the group or community.
• Gender roles and interaction between people of different genders.
• Attitudes to time and the importance of the past, present and future.
• The importance of written codes, laws and contracts as opposed to verbal agreements and generally understood practices.

Try to recognise the positive intentions of the attitudes and customs of other cultures, rather than dismissing them as ‘backward,’ silly or archaic.

AUSTRALIANISMS

Here are a few Australian habits that are sometimes misinterpreted by or seem strange to other cultures:

• Poking fun at people and using sarcasm.
• Using ‘sorry’ frequently, often in minor situations where other cultures might use ‘excuse-me’.
• Using first names and an informal tone even when speaking to figures of authority or strangers.
• Directness or frankness when speaking to others.

Don’t stress about memorising long lists of customs and etiquette rules from your host country. You can often observe other people and follow their example, and simply understanding the core values of your host culture will help you judge appropriate behaviour.

CULTURE SHOCK

When studying abroad, students often experience an initial period of elation and excitement, followed by an emotional crash known as ‘culture shock’. The constant challenge of new situations and obstacles can become exhausting and depressing. It is normal to experience this feeling and it usually improves over time once you start to feel more accustomed to the host country.

WHAT IS ‘NORMAL’?

As someone who is influenced by your own culture and upbringing, you will judge behaviour as ‘normal’ or acceptable because of your own cultural values. Self-reflection is one of the best ways to understand cultural differences, so consider what some typical Australian values might be, how your behaviour and attitudes are influenced by these and how these might differ to those of your host culture. You can use the cultural values list on the opposite page to get ideas.

CULTURE & CUSTOMS

“Culture is the lens through which we see the world.”
[Kevin Avruch, John Paul Lederach]

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In France there are two ways of addressing people: Vous (‘you’ formal) and Tu (‘you’ informal). Titles (Monsieur or Madame) are used in formal situations.

La bise (the cheek kiss) is commonly used in France, and is performed to greet or to congratulate friends and family (though is used to a lesser extent between male friends). La bise can be done with the lips touching or not touching the cheek. It does not indicate romantic interest!

The number of kisses done when greeting someone, and the side of the face on which the kiss starts, varies depending on who you are greeting. If in doubt, follow the other person’s lead!

Shaking hands when greeting somebody is also customary, and used for formal and informal occasions. In France, hugs are used by parents with their children, by close relatives, or by lovers; not in place of kisses but as complements to comfort, greet or congratulate someone. Hugs are not that common amongst friends.

The French are known for their love of passionate discussion and debate. What Australians might see as arguing is in fact often just an animated discussion!

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A traditional French meal consists of four courses: entrée, plat de résistance (main dish), fromage et salade, and dessert.

If you are invited to someone’s house to share a meal, ask them if they would like you to bring a dish or a drink along to contribute. It is common practice.

More than 60% of the French population is Roman Catholic, however numbers of practising Catholics are lower. Many French traditions and celebrations are of Christian origin.

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HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

France is a vast museum full of traces of its past, both ancient or more recent. Historical remnants are greatly cared for and are often classified as part of the national heritage. France has had a long and varied history with two major conflicts on its soil (WWI and II) during the 20th century. Historical consciousness is an integral part of French culture and the French give history and its lessons an important place.

MULTICULTURALISM

Immigration has brought increasing cultural diversity to France. Immigrants come largely from the following countries:

- Algeria
- Morocco
- Portugal
- Italy
- Spain
- Turkey
- Tunisia
- England
- Germany
- Belgium
- Poland
- Vietnam
- Senegal
- China
- Serbia
- Ivory Cost
- Mali
- Cameroon
- Cambodia
- Switzerland

Traditionally people choose several middle names for their children. These are often the names of grandparents.

THE CALENDRIER DES POSTES

On the calendrier des Postes (the French traditional calendar of the Post) there is a name of a Christian saint for most days of the year. Traditionally people expecting a baby chose the baby’s name from the calendar. Thereafter the ‘name day’ of the child was an opportunity for a little celebration. Nowadays, with diverse foreign influences, people often choose from a broader range of names and not solely from the calendrier des Postes.

There is one region in France with a special and historic connection to Australia, a region where Australia has a particular place in the heart of the locals – the Somme region.

Some of the bloodiest battles World War II took place here. Scores of Australian soldiers fought and died here, and they are buried in various different villages in the area: Villers-Bretonneux, Le Hamel, Pozieres, Fiers, Peronne, Bullecourt, Fromelles. Many Australians still visit Somme to pay their respects.

AUSTRALIANS WHO DIED IN FRANCE

Morts pour la France

There has been a growing interest in Australia among the French, particularly since the Olympic games were held in Sydney in 2000. There has been an ever increasing number of tourists, especially backpackers, travelling down under in recent years. However, you’re still likely to meet many French people who don’t know a lot about Australia, so be prepared to talk about your country and your culture.

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CULTURE & CUSTOMS
ÉPIPHANIE
On Epiphany (the first Sunday after January 1st), many families follow a tradition of eating La Galette des Rois. This is a kind of cake with a trinket (une fève) – a porcelain or plastic figurine of some kind – hidden inside. The lucky person who gets the piece of cake containing the trinket will be crowned King or Queen. This delicious cake can be found in most French bakeries during the month of January, and is sold with a paper crown. La Galette consists of flaky puff pastry layers with a dense centre of frangipane (made from almonds).

MARDI GRAS & LES CRÊPES DE LA CHANDELEUR
For Roman Catholics Mardi Gras is the final festive day before the austere 40 days of Lent during which, in earlier times, people fasted. It refers to the old custom of consuming fats before fasting to remember the sacrifice made by Christ. It ends with Easter. This holiday is celebrated with parades. In France it is also called la Chandeleur (Candle Mass) and is traditionally a day where the French make crêpes and children wear masks and disguises.

PÂQUES (EASTER)
For this Christian celebration, you will find shops beautifully decorated with white and dark chocolate oeufs de Pâques (Easter eggs) but also rabbits, chickens, bells and fish. Children wake up on the Easter Sunday morning and look in the nests that have been placed in yards, gardens or bedrooms, expecting to find beautifully decorated Easter eggs placed in them.

POISSON D’AVRIL (APRIL FOOLS / APRIL FISH)
The first day of April is a day of mischief, where people hang, as discreetly as possible, small paper fish on other people’s backs as a joke, in the hope that they will walk around all day without noticing them. This is particularly popular amongst children in schools. Even the media will sometimes broadcast false but credible news on this day.

GLOSSARY
la fête - festival / public holiday / party
les vacances (pl) - holiday
joyeux anniversaire! - happy birthday!
joyeuses Pâques! - happy Easter!
la galette des rois - cake of kings
la fève - trinket found in a cake of kings
les œufs de Pâques - Easter eggs
le poisson d’avril - April fools day
la farce - practical joke
les crêpes de la Chandeleur - Candle Mass pancakes

The trinket found in a ‘Galette des Rois’ was traditionally a fava bean, hence the name fève.
FÊTE DU PREMIER MAI / FÊTE DU MUGUET
Labour day, or Lily-of-the-valley Day takes place on the first of May. It is not a day of strike in France, but one where unions traditionally march in the streets of big cities, and where sprigs of muguet; a delicate, bell-shaped, sweetly scented flower; are sold in the streets.

LA FÊTE DE LA MUSIQUE
The 21st of June is a celebration of music all over France. This very popular day is also the first day of summer and one of the longest in the year. A free outdoor festival provides the opportunity to listen to all kinds of music played by amateurs and professionals, in venues that are as varied as the music.

LE 14 JULIET (BASTILLE DAY)
This French national holiday commemorates the storming of the Bastille, which took place on the 14th of July 1789 and marked the beginning of the French Revolution.

The Bastille was a prison and a symbol of the arbitrary power of Louis the 16th’s Ancien Régime. By capturing this building, the people signalled that the king’s power was no longer absolute. The storming of the Bastille is a symbol of the fight against oppression. It marked the beginning of the end of absolute monarchy, the birth of a sovereign Nation, and, eventually, the creation of the (First) Republic, in 1792.

Official celebrations include a military parade on the Champs-Élysées avenue in Paris in front of the President of the Republic. Some provincial cities also hold military parades. In villages there might be a parade with local anciens combattants (war veterans), a fanfara (a brass-band) and majorettes (baton twirlers). The mayor of the village often lays a gerbe (bouquet of flowers) at the monument aux morts (the war memorial), and at night there are usually fireworks.

Under the Ancien Régime blue and white were part of the royal flag. The French Revolution simplified and changed the design, which until then had been elaborate, to express the radical changes being introduced. In 1794 the Tricolor, with vertical stripes ordered blue-white-red, was made the official national flag. It was seen to embody all the principles of the revolution: liberty, equality, fraternity, democracy, secularism, and modernisation.
**CULTURE & CUSTOMS**

**LA TOUSSAINT (ALL SAINTS)**
November 1st, la Toussaint, is the traditional annual day for the honouring of deceased relatives.

**NOËL (CHRISTMAS)**
In France, Christmas is a time for family and generosity, marked by family reunions, gifts and candy for children, gifts for the poor, la messe de minuit (midnight mass), and le Réveillon (Christmas Eve celebration). Le Réveillon usually involves a rich meal with plenty of champagne, starting for example with fresh oysters and finishing with a bûche de Noël (log-shaped cake).

Traditionally, family members put a pair of shoes in front of the chimney or Christmas tree. Le père Noël (father Christmas) is said to come down through the chimney and lay gifts next to each pair of shoes. Although there are regional variations; sapin de Noël (Christmas tree) and guirlandes (tinsel) displays in homes, shops and streets are a national tradition. You can see la crèche (a nativity scene) in churches or town squares. In France, you are more likely to have a white Christmas, particularly in the mountainous regions. Occasionally it snows in Paris!

In Paris, the department stores ‘Galeries Lafayette’ and ‘Printemps’ are well known for their spectacular Christmas window displays in the month of December, and many people crowd around to see them.

The expression ‘meilleurs vœux’ (best wishes) is often used during the end-of-year holiday season.

**SAINT SYLVESTRE (NEW YEAR’S EVE)**
In France, New Year’s Eve (31st December) is called la Nuit de la Saint-Sylvestre, or le réveillon du Nouvel An, and is celebrated with a feast called le Réveillon de la Saint-Sylvestre. The feast tends to include special items like champagne and foie gras. It can be a family reunion or a dinner with friends. At midnight, everyone kisses sous le gui (under the mistletoe) and offers their best wishes for the new year. On New Year’s Day, le Jour de l’An, friends and family share their New Year’s resolutions and may also exchange cards and gifts.

**PUBLIC HOLIDAYS**

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>New Year’s Day / le Jour de l’An</td>
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<tr>
<td>March/April*</td>
<td>Good Friday / Vendredi Saint</td>
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<tr>
<td>March/April*</td>
<td>Easter Monday / le lundi de Pâques</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 May</td>
<td>Labour Day / la fête du premier mai</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 May</td>
<td>Victory Day (end of WWII) / la fête de la Victoire 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May/June*</td>
<td>Ascension Day / l’Ascension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May/June*</td>
<td>Whit Monday / Lundi de Pentecôte</td>
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<td>14 July</td>
<td>Bastille Day / le 14 juillet / la fête nationale</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 August</td>
<td>Assumption / l’Assomption</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 November</td>
<td>All Saints Day / la Toussaint</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 November</td>
<td>Armistice Day (end of WWII) / Armistice de 1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 December</td>
<td>Christmas Day / Noël</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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* Indicates that dates vary from year to year.

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>> NOVEMBER

>> DECEMBER

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The expression ‘meilleurs vœux’ (best wishes) is often used during the end-of-year holiday season.
THE DEGREE SYSTEM

The French degree system is similar to the Australian system in that there are three main degree levels:

- Bachelor’s Degree (Licence) - 3 years
- Master’s Degree (Masters) - 2 years
- Doctorate (Doctorat) - 3 years

Degrees at Grandes Écoles are different in that a student gains a Masters degree after the first 3 years of study, as the 2 years of classes préparatoires before entry are considered part of their higher education.

When completing your exchange in France, you may be studying at either a University or at one of the Grandes Écoles. So what’s the difference?

Les Grandes Écoles are small highly selective schools that offer courses primarily in the fields of engineering, management, politics and higher education teaching. To attend one of these elite schools French students must complete 2 years of classes préparatoires at the end of high school and pass difficult exams. These classes are already considered to be part of higher education and as such, foreign students are usually only allowed to attend Grandes Écoles if they have already completed 2 or more years of undergraduate study. These schools often have links to business and industry. France also has several private and public schools of architecture and art.

Universities provide higher education to French students that have successfully completed the high school final exam, the baccalauréat. They offer a wide variety of programs in all disciplines, and majority of French students study at universities. Medicine and pharmacy can only be studied at universities.

French universities recently changed to the Licence/Masters system as part of an effort across Europe to implement uniform, internationally recognised degrees. The old DEUG/Licence/ Maîtrise system consisted of a series of shorter diplomas.

Thanks to support from the French government, tuition fees at universities are very low.

Information on UQ partner universities / écoles in France: www.uq.edu.au/uqabroad/france

GLOSSARY

l’université (f) / la faculté / la fac - university
la grande école - elite school (higher education)
le diplôme - degree
la licence - bachelors degree
le master - masters degree
le doctorat - doctorate / PhD
l'étudiant étranger (m) - international student
le professeur / la professeure - lecturer / professor
la matière - subject
la filière d'études - course
le cours - class / lesson
le cours magistral / CM - lecture
les travaux dirigés / travaux pratiques - tutorial
le devoir - assignment
l'examen (m) - exam
le baccalauréat - high school leaver’s exam
la note - mark (i.e. course or exam result)
le restaurant universitaire - student cafeteria
l’association étudiante (f) - student society / guild

UNIVERSITY LIFE
THE ACADEMIC YEAR

The French academic year begins in September, with various short breaks, and a long three or four month summer break at the end of the academic year. Here is a rough guide of when the term dates usually are:

- **Sep / Oct** - First Semester Begins
- **Dec** - End First Semester & Christmas Break (2 wks)
- **Jan** - Second Semester Begins
- **Feb / Mar** - Winter Break (1 or 2 wks)
- **Mar / Apr** - Easter Break (1 or 2 wks)
- **May / June** - End of Academic Year, and Summer Break Begins (3 or 4 months)

EXAMS AND GRADING

Exams take place at the end of each semester, though short quizzes may occur throughout the semester. The grading scale is from 0 to 20, with 20 being the best. It is very difficult to achieve a mark over 16 and only a small percentage of students manage to do this.

- < 10 Fail
- 10 - 11.99 Pass
- 12 - 13.99 Satisfactory
- 14 - 15.99 Good
- 16 - 20 Very Good

CLASSES

As in Australia, studying in France involves completing lectures and tutorials:

- **Lectures** (cours magistral / CM) usually take place in lecture halls with large groups of students, who take notes as the lecturer speaks. Course outlines and lecture notes are often provided, as in Australia.

- **Tutorials** (travaux dirigés / TD) allow small groups of students to build on what they have learnt in the lectures. Attendance is usually mandatory.

FOREIGN STUDENTS

The numbers of international students at French universities and schools is increasing as the government works to promote and support international exchanges and attract foreign students. The majority of students are, however, still of French or European origin.

In France a comma is equivalent to an Australian decimal point.

French students study between 7 and 10 subjects per semester.

Use a title and last name when addressing lecturers (i.e. ‘Monsieur _,’ ‘Madame _,’ ‘Professeur _’) as well as the formal form of vous (‘vous’).

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Foreign students study between 7 and 10 subjects per semester.

Use a title and last name when addressing lecturers (i.e. ‘Monsieur _,’ ‘Madame _,’ ‘Professeur _’) as well as the formal form of you (‘vous’).

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WHAT DO FRENCH STUDENTS DO WITH THEIR FREE TIME?

STUDENT JOBS

Many French students work while studying, either throughout semester or during the summer break. Students usually find jobs in hospitality, retail and tourism, though it is not uncommon for students to work in a job related to their field of study.

So as an exchange student in France, are you allowed to work? If you are have the correct type of visa or residency permit, you may be eligible to work for a limited number of hours per week. If not, you will need to apply for a temporary work permit. Contact your local French Labour Office (DIRECCTE) for further information.

LEISURE

French universities and écoles usually offer a wide variety of sports facilities and activities. Sports teams and clubs can also be found in the local communities around universities. Tennis, soccer, rugby, basketball, cycling, handball, dancing, boxing, fencing, swimming, volleyball, skiing and martial arts are just a few of the sports you may be able to become involved in. Student sports societies also offer the opportunity to get involved in sports teams and activities.

Other popular student activities include going to student-organised parties (becoming a member of a student society is often a good way to find out about these), and going to the cinema or theatre.

If enrolled in a practically-orientated degree, French students are often required to complete internships as part of their studies.

SIGN UP! - STUDENT SOCIETIES

Many French universities and écoles have student societies and associations. These societies may be related to arts, politics, sports or philanthropy, and are a great way to meet people and get involved with different student activities and events. These societies are often focused on developing life skills and fostering civic spirit. The range of societies can be very diverse, from those that offer support for exams and academic pursuits, to gaming and hot-air ballooning clubs, so it’s worth checking if there’s one that would interest you.

USEFUL LINKS FOR STUDENTS

- CNOUS (Student Services Organisation) - www.cnous.fr/index.php?lg=en
  This website for the ‘Centre National des Oeuvres Universitaires et Scolaires’ is a great source of information for students on food, accommodation, grants, health, jobs, money, leisure, campus activities and culture. The site includes listings of student accommodation, casual jobs, and subsidized student food outlets.

  Provides succinct information for foreign students on studying in France, including information on courses and the French education system.

- French Ministry of Foreign Affairs - www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en
  Information on studying in France, visas, grants, life in France and administrative processes.

Contact details of local french labour offices can be found on www.travail-solidarite.gouv.fr under: Information Pratiques > Adresses utiles > DIRECCTE et unités territoriales
FREEBIES & DISCOUNTS!

- If you have a valid student ID card you can use any of the 450 university restaurants found throughout France. These Restaurants Universitaires are subsidized by the government and offer meals at very cheap prices. Some are open nights and on weekends.
- Your student card will get you discounts on movies, theatres, museums & sporting events, though this may not apply on weekends.
- Find out about local festivals and cultural events, as students usually enjoy discounts at these events. There are also often free public events and exhibitions in cities.
- Take advantage of university accommodation or discounted student accommodation if possible.
- Explore historic local castles, monuments and churches. It often won’t cost you anything unless you decide to see a special inner chamber, pay for a tour or climb a tower.
- Consider going outside the cities. France has beautiful mountains, forests, rivers and lakes. Go for walks, cycle, swim... you don’t need a lot of money to have fun!
Eating well and with pleasure is part of French culture. In France you will have plenty of opportunities to experience good food and cuisine in restaurants, traditional fresh food shops (boulangerie, pâtisserie, charcuterie, primeurs, etc.) and markets (marchés), but don’t expect everyone to be a good cook!

The French eat bread (le pain) in large quantities, and French bakeries offer a wide variety of different breads: baguette, pains de campagne, brioche, flûte, ficelle…

La cuisine française includes influences from Italian, Spanish, North-African, German and other cuisines. You will find local specialities and dishes in every region of France, and people usually take great pride in their local cuisine.

A traditional French meal has 3 or 4 courses:
1. Entrées/hors-d’oeuvre
2. Plat de résistance (main dish)
3. Salade-fromage (lettuce-cheese) and/or
4. Dessert

BREAKFAST (LE PETIT DÉJEUNER)
Breakfast in France usually consists of very light biscuits or tartines beurrées (slices of bread spread with butter, jam or honey) and a bowl of café au lait (white coffee) or chocolat chaud (hot chocolate). Croissants are traditionally eaten for weekend breakfasts.

You will find local specialities and dishes in every region of France, and people usually take great pride in their local cuisine.

« Comment voulez-vous gouverner un pays où il existe plus de 300 sortes de fromage ? »
(“How can you bring together a country that has more than 300 sorts of cheese?”) — Charles de Gaulle, former President of the Republic

GOING OUT

ALSACE
- Tarte Flambée: flat bread with sour cream and bacon
- Choucroute garnie: sauerkraut with sausages, salt pork and potatoes

BRITTANY
- Crêpes: thin pancakes with savoury or sweet fillings
- Far breton: flan with prunes

BURGUNDY
- Boeuf bourguignon: beef stewed in red wine
- Coq au vin: chicken braised in red wine

LOIRE VALLEY
- Andouillettes: sausages made with chitterlings
- Rillettes: spreadable paste made from braised pork and rendered fat, similar to pâté

TOULOUSE REGION
- Cassoulet: a dish made with beans, sausages and preserved duck/goose

LORRAINE
- Quiche lorraine: bacon and cheese quiche

NORMANDY
- Moules à la crème: mussels cooked with white wine, cider, garlic and cream
- Tarte Normande: apple tart
- Tripes à la mode de Caen: tripe cooked in cider and calvados white wine

RHÔNE-ALPES
- Gratin dauphinois: a type of potato gratin
- Quenelles: creamy dumplings made with fish / meat
- Raclette: melted cheese served with potatoes, ham and often dried beef

PROVENCE / CÔTE D’AZUR
- Ratatouille: vegetable stew
- Salade Niçoise: salad with varied ingredients, but always with black olives and tuna

It is customary to wish everyone ‘bon appétit’ at the beginning of a meal, and ‘à votre/ta santé!’ (to your health) when alcohol is poured and for toasts.

« Comment voulez-vous gouverner un pays où il existe plus de 300 sortes de fromage ? »
(“How can you bring together a country that has more than 300 sorts of cheese?”) — Charles de Gaulle, former President of the Republic
EATING OUT

If meeting with friends for a coffee or a casual meal, you will find a large choice of cafés and bars (bistrots in slang) with meals at reasonable prices. There are also many high quality restaurants with delicious food and great wines.

There is no need to go to the counter to order drinks or food in a café. Un serveur (a waiter) or une serveuse (a waitress) will come to your table to take your order.

Nowadays the French often buy their lunch at traiteurs (prepared food shops), which are often also charcuterie shops that sell delicious ready-to-eat food. The French also often buy their lunch at boulangeries (bakeries) that make sandwiches, or at croissanteries.

In large cities you will also find affordable Arabic take away food, French or American fast food and international food (Italian, Asian, North African...).

POPULAR NON-REGIONAL DISHES

• Soupe / Salade: there are a wide variety of French soups made with vegetables, meat, noodles or fish, and salads made with different combinations of lettuce, vegetables, meats, nuts and dressings
• Salade et fromage: cheese served with a variety of different types of lettuce (laitue, scarole, endive, frisée, romaine, mâche...)
• Blanquette de veau: stew of veal with white sauce
• Boudin blanc: white sausage made with pork
• Charcuterie: pork and poultry meat products e.g. pâtés, sausages, hams etc.
• Foie gras: duck liver pâté (popular at Christmas)
• Omelette: omelette
• Pommes de terres sautées: sautéed potatoes
• Steak frites: steak and fries
• Steak et purée de pomme de terre: steak and mashed potatoes

SOME TRADITIONAL FRENCH SWEETS

• Chou à la crème: cream puff
• Clafouts: black cherries baked in a custard batter
• Congolais: coconut macaroon
• Crêpe dentelle bretonne: thin Breton pancake
• Dragées: sugared almonds (for weddings and christenings)
• Macaron: meringue-based pastry
• Madeleine: small sponge cake
• Mille-feuilles: custard slice
• Pain d’épices: spiced bread
• Palmier: flaky palm-shaped pastry
• Religieuse: chocolate éclair shaped like a nun
• Tarte tatin: caramelized apple tart
• Some other well known french sweets: nougat, brioches, croissant, profiteroles, mousse au chocolat, crème brûlée, éclair, truffes au chocolat

Contrary to popular belief, the average French person does not eat frogs legs and snails often, and may not have even tasted these delicacies. They are perhaps more often consumed by foreigners wanting to ‘eat like the French’ than by French people themselves!
THINGS TO DO

Local cinemas, concerts, clubs, theatres and sporting events are fun places to spend an evening. The French also like to spend time in bars or sitting outside at cafés in summer.

If you are looking for things to do during the day, try exploring some of the local museums, historic buildings, art galleries, shopping districts and markets. Each city should have a local event guide available online or at the local library; or will have a tourist office which can give you tips on what to see and do in the area.

Le guide du routard (The Backpacker’s Guide) is an online tourist guide that is also available in paperback format. It offers a wealth of information and ideas for things to do and places to go to. Initially a practical guide for penniless travellers, it is now a highly popular guide for anybody travelling to France.

SOME TYPICAL DRINKS

- **Apéritif**: a drink served before a meal
- **Digestif**: a drink served after a meal
- **Vin**: the major wine growing regions or ‘grands crus’ in France include Bordeaux (which produces one of the most popular brands of wine, made from blends of grapes such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot), Bourgogne (Burgundy) and Côte du Rhône
- **Champagne**: a drink for special occasions, usually served as an aperitif before a meal or dessert. Famous Champagnes include Dom Pérignon, Moët et Chandon, Taittinger and Veuve Clicquot
- **Chartreuse**: a popular liqueur (originally produced by monks) made of 130 plants
- **Cidre**: cider (French cider usually comes from the Normandy region)
- **Cognac**: a liqueur made with distilled white wine (most often used in cocktails)
- **Crème de Cassis**: black currant liquor (used in many famous cocktails)
- **Bénédictine**: the oldest French liqueur, based on cognac, made of 27 plants and spices
- **Kir**: a popular cocktail made with black currant liquor and white wine
- **Pastis**: the most popular aperitif, made with anise, liqueur and other aromatic plants
- **Ricqlès**: soft drink flavoured with mint
- **Bière**: beer

**WINTER DRINKS**

- **le vin cuit**: hot white wine with oranges, cinnamon and cloves
- **le grog**: rum, lemon juice, cinnamon or sugar & water
As a student in France you will probably be wondering where the bonnes affaires (bargains) are to be found. Here are some suggestions for places to shop:

**SOUVENIRS**

If you are looking for a gift to bring back home, you will be spoilt for choice. Each region of France has local specialities. Art & craft markets are usually amongst the cheapest places to find unique souvenirs and gifts.

Here are a few suggestions for souvenirs:

- A bottle of French wine, aperitif or digestif liqueur
- A CD of chanson française classics (French music)
- A béret or a Tour de France yellow jersey
- A miniature-game of pétanque
- A book of recipes
- A French comic book (e.g. Astérix)

**GROCERIES**

Some low-cost supermarket chains are Intermarché, Supermarché Maxi, Proxi, Franprix, G20, Aldi and Ed. Many French towns also have open markets once a week. These are a good option for fresh local produce. They are also a must see as a key part of French food culture and for their lively atmosphere.

**APPLIANCES**

Stores include Darty, Conforama, Auchan and Leclerc.

**STATIONERY**

Try a store on campus, a supermarket, a department store or a librairie-papeterie (book and stationery shop).

**CLOTHING**


**BOOKS & MEDIA**

Most bookshops in France are independent, however you can buy books, CDs and DVDs at FNAC and Gibert Joseph (which are excellent) as well as at Virgin Megastores, Cultura and Espaces culturels Leclerc. Gibert Jeune in Paris is good for new & used textbooks.

**OPENING HOURS**

The French shopping week comprises 6 days (Mon-Sat), with shops generally open from 9am-12pm, and 2pm-7pm. In towns and villages shops close at lunchtime, though large department stores usually stay open. Shops are usually closed on Sundays. To find the opening hours of a local store visit: www.les-horaires.fr

- **Banks:** Usually open 9am-4:30 or 5pm, Mon-Fri or Tue-Sat. Some close between 12:30 and 2pm. Automatic tellers are operational 24/7
- **Supermarkets & Shopping Malls:** Generally open from 9am until 7 or 8pm, 6 days a week. Some open on Sunday mornings
- **Pharmacies:** In cities there is usually a pharmacie de garde open on Sunday and at night, easy to recognise as its green cross is lit
- **Post Offices:** In cities most are open 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, and 8am-12pm on Saturday
- **Petrol Stations:** 24/7 in cities, or till late
- **Fast Food Outlets:** In big cities some stay open 24/7, though most keep normal hours.

In some supermarkets, you will need to use a 1€ or 0.50€ coin to borrow a shopping trolley, which you will get back once you return the trolley. You will have to pay for plastic bags, so bring your own reusable bags. Some supermarkets require you to weigh your own fruit and vegetables using the machines provided.

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FRENCH
The official language of France is French. A growing number of people, particularly those of the younger generation, speak some English, and will be happy to practice. However, be prepared to speak French and take the opportunity to improve your language skills.

SLANG & COLLOQUIALISMS
The French have an extensive range of words and expressions outside the conventional language. Be careful when using them as slang ranges from informal to vulgar or offensive. On the next page is a list of widely used informal slang words.

DIALECTS & REGIONAL LANGUAGES IN FRANCE
There are more than 30 dialectes or patois in metropolitan France. These are remnants of a time when regional linguistic differences in France were strong. Over several centuries the dialect spoken in Paris became the dominant national one, and was imposed as the official language after the French revolution, to unify the country. Dialects can be hard to understand as they differ in accent, vocabulary and grammar from French.

In addition to these dialects, independent languages like Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corse, Occitan and Alsacien are officially recognised and taught in France, though all French people will speak French.

ABBREVIATIONS
l’appart (m) - flat (short for appartement)
le dico - dictionary (short for dictionnaire)
la fac - university (short for faculté)
le frigo - fridge (short for réfrigérateur)
l’imper (m) - raincoat (short for imperméable)
l’ordi (m) - computer (short for ordinateur)
le / la prof - teacher (short for professeur)

More information and audio examples of different french dialects: http://french.about.com/od/dialfrance/French_Dialects_Patois_and_Regional_Languages.htm

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SOME FRENCH INFORMAL & SLANG WORDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>la bagnole</td>
<td>car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la caisse</td>
<td>car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bosser</td>
<td>to work / slave away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le boulot</td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le bouquin</td>
<td>book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chouette / cool</td>
<td>nice / cool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c’est chouette!</td>
<td>that’s great!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le cinoche</td>
<td>movie theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dinge</td>
<td>crazy / nuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le fric</td>
<td>cash / money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c’est la galère</td>
<td>it’s a nightmare / it’s such a pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>galérer</td>
<td>to sweat blood / struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>génial</td>
<td>brilliant / great / cool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marrant</td>
<td>funny / odd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mince!</td>
<td>damn it! / wow!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moche</td>
<td>ugly / mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le pot</td>
<td>drink / luck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prendre un pot</td>
<td>to have a drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avoir du pot</td>
<td>to be lucky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le pote</td>
<td>mate / buddy / chum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rigoler</td>
<td>to laugh / have fun / joke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu rigoles!</td>
<td>you’re joking!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ringard</td>
<td>corny / old-fashioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>les tunes (f pl)</td>
<td>money / bucks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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This booklet has been designed to assist students of The University of Queensland who are planning to go on exchange to France through the UQ Abroad program. It contains practical, cultural and language-related information that is relevant to students.