FRANCE



France is both a modern country and a country rooted in tradition, with architecture and rural scenery which has changed little in several centuries. In addition to the vast cultured riches of Paris, France offers an amazing diversity of regions, each with a unique identity. Evident in every region is the French people's pride in their country and their enjoyment of life.

AREA: 213,011 sq. miles **POPULATION:** 65,970,000 **CAPITAL:** Paris *(population: 2,100,000)*
GOVERNMENT: Republic **LANGUAGE:** French

FOOD & DRINK In France, food specialties vary by region depending on the local produce available. A fairly-priced lunch dish in France is soupe à l'oignon (onion soup), or a croque monsieur (a grilled sandwich with cheeses and/or meats). Baguettes are a popular choice for sandwich bread. If you feel more adventurous at your independent meals, find a restaurant where you can try escargots (snails in garlic butter and parsley), or paté de foie gras (rich goose-liver paté). Sauces are the secret of French cuisine. The main course is usually followed by salad, an inviting cheese platter, and then a dessert. With your lunch, you can order an inexpensive carafe (or demi-carafe) of white, red, or rosé wine.

CLIMATE The climate is temperate throughout most of France, with cool winters and mild summers. Along the Mediterranean, winters are mild and summers are hot.

BANKING HOURS In Paris, banks usually open at 8:30AM or 9:00AM and close between 4:00PM and 5:30PM Monday through Friday or Tuesday through Saturday. Hours vary throughout the rest of the country.

SHOPPING You will find not only the trend-setting modern fashions for women, but also smart attire for men and beautiful clothing for children. In various small shops you can find beautiful and unusual art prints. Of course, France has numerous excellent wines and cheeses. France is also known for its chocolates, pastries and colorful macaron cookies. Look for open-air markets with handmade goods, such as baskets and pottery. Shops are generally open 9:00AM to noon and 2:00PM - 6:30PM, Monday through Saturday. These hours may vary depending on the city. In the south, shops may take a longer mid-day break and stay open later.

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