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Current Issue Index

LIVING OVERSEAS »

Getting an Education in France

Are There Really Jobs in France

Linda's Wild Adventure in France

Top Communities in France

The Passion Play in Paris

France: Romancing the Legal System

Shopping Paris is Fabuloso

Artists as Expat Nomads

Extreme Sports in Argentina

INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE »

European Union Escapeartist Websites for Lease

International Investor Beware: US Distressed Real Estate

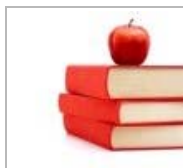
The Beautiful View of Panama!

OVERSEAS RETIREMENT »

Things to do While Visiting France

Bali: The Ultimate Spiritual

Featured Articles



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By Escapeartist Staff - France - (0)

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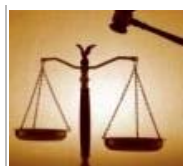
Expats in Chile

Escaping to Koro Island

ASSET PROTECTION»

Setting Up Your Business in France

Cowboys Against Cancer and Fun in Cabo San Lucas



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Law in France can be quite different from what people are used to see in countries like the U.S. for example...



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Getting an Education in France

By Escapeartist Staff - France / May 11 • Categorized as [Living Overseas](#) •  [Download Print Friendly PDF](#)



Parlez vous francais?

France is one of the most populated countries in Europe, with more than 66 million people, out of which around 90% lives in the metropolitan area of the European country. This number of population however, while still growing, it is doing so at an ever decreasing rate, and France's population under 25 is now of just 19 million, far less than last decade. This decreasing rate of youngsters however, hasn't affected the French education level, which is still among the top of the region and which is known to heavily influence the living standards of people in every country, especially in one like France, which boasts one of the highest income levels per citizen with around 22,000 Euros, an income level that is possible thanks on the most part to the education offered to the French population.

Of all the 66 million people that inhabit France, around a quarter of them (16 million people) are pupils and students fully integrated into the French education system, while

only around 2 million are undertaking higher education.

Education spending is another important factor to measure the overall situation of education in a country, and in this respect, France stands around the middle when compared to the rest of Europe, with countries like Sweden and Denmark being the ones that spend the most on education in Europe, and France spending around 1.33 billion Euros on it every year, the equivalent to around 7.5% of its GDP (Gross Domestic Product). This moderate spending has nonetheless, yielded very positive results, with

France's unemployment rate being stable well below of 9%.

Now that we know its importance, let's take a look at the situation of education in France.

- **Unified education:** Contrary to what can be found on some other countries, the French education system offers a three-level educational system, where student first go through primary school, then to secondary school, and then undertake any form of higher education, which can be any particular University, a 1 or 2 year course or an Institute. This compartmentalized system makes instruction procedures far more streamlined, which in turn achieves a very even level of education across all France.
- **Pre-school initiatives:** A very important advancement when it comes to pre-school initiatives implemented by the Government since the 70's is that all pre-school students can assist to nursery classes.
- **Compulsory primary education:** since more than 40 years ago, France has made primary education for all children between 6 and 16 years compulsory, implementing more than 60,000 schools around the country specially targeted at providing primary school education to children up to 5 years old. These schools have special teaching systems in place that makes the transition from primary to secondary school very smooth for students.
- **Secondary school transition:** Differently from primary school, secondary education in France is not mandatory, but it is given the exact same importance as primary education. Once in secondary school, children from 11 to 15 years all attend regular lessons regardless of their skill level or different achievements. However, after the 15 years of age, children are required to go attend either a general, a technical or a vocational "lycee", which are institutions that help children determine their careers by focusing in their areas of interest, while at the same time preparing them for the Higher education entrance examinations that they will undertake at the age of 18.
- **Streamlined decision-making:** Whenever it is necessary to make a decision about any particular (or many) pupil/s, France has implemented a very streamlined process that involves all concerned parties, including parents and even pupils themselves. This "committee", which is also known traditionally as the Class

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Council, can handle such decisions related to students as: repeating years, moving up to a higher year due to proven academic ability, changing courses and others. Also each school provides parents, teachers and pupils with specialized advisors that can better orient them with any doubt they might have when facing these or other scenarios.

- Mandatory (and progressive) transition policies: Once students in France reach the last year of secondary school, they can start choosing some specific subjects that interest them and that they would like to pursue in their search for their career. On top of that, one of the most beneficial measures that the French Government has implemented is the compulsory study of not one, but at least two foreign languages, each to be started 3 and 1 year before finishing secondary school respectively.
- Special cases: While the great majority of students attend traditional schools under the administration of the Ministry of National Education, there are more than 600,000 students who go to other types of schools, which have different sets of regulations. First, there are more than 100,000 pupils who suffer from various disabilities and who need to attend special schools under the regulation of the Ministry of Health, then there are 200,000+ students that choose instead to go to vocational and technical courses, which provide them with a technical degree in just 2 or three years at most. And lastly, there are around 300,000 pupils who start going into apprenticeships that prepare them for "real life", although, being underage; they are not treated under the same regulations and conditions as adult workers.

Of special note is the introduction on the part of the French Government, of "specialist" classes implemented at most schools, but more prominently at special schools attended by pupils who suffer from either behavioral or emotional problems or who are simply slow learners. These specialist classes help children adapt and find their vocation in order to be brought back to the main French educational system.

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The French state education system is extremely highly regarded, both at home and also on an international level. To give a brief overview of the system, it is divided into:

- Nursery schools (Ecole Maternelle)
- Primary schools (Ecole Primaire)
- Secondary schools, starting with College (College) until age 15.
- At this point, the next step depends on a child's exam results. Top students go to High school (Lycee) to study for the Baccalaureat qualification, others attend Vocational College. Most children in France continue in education beyond age 16.

The French higher-education system has a number of features that make it very successful and attractive for students. In particular, a wide range of institutions are available: universities, "grandes écoles," and specialist schools.

Studying French

How you structure your French-language-study program is a very personal decision. And, there are almost limitless places to study. Some things to consider when beginning your study are:

- Do you want to study at home or in France?
- Do you want to study full or part time?
- What type of French do you need to learn (general, business, technical, etc.)?
- What is your desired fluency level for speaking French?
- What do you expect to pay for your learning?

French International Schools

There are excellent private schools (écoles privées) for anyone wishing to study in France. Private schools include parochial, bilingual, international and a wide range of foreign schools, including US and British schools.

- The Office de Documentation et d'Information de l'Enseignement Privé (ODIEP, 01 43 29 90 70) provides information about private schools from nursery to university level.
- UNAPEL (01 53 73 73 90) provides information about parochial schools.
- The Centre National de Documentation sur l'Enseignement Privé (01 47 05 32 68) publishes a list of all French private schools.

The Best French Universities

The French higher-education system offers both short and long-term programs. Short programs, two-three years, basically focus students on the industrial, commercial and service sectors.

Long programs, term lengths vary, are offered by the universities and "grandes écoles". These focus students on specialization in their subject area (research).

According to the Study Abroad organization, the universities that continually rank in the top 10 are:

- College of France



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Study Pros and Cons

Here are some important considerations when deciding to study in France:

Pros:

- Excellent education programs
- Low tuition and fees compared to other major countries
- Foreigners are welcome
- Safe environment
- Enjoying the French culture

Cons:

- Basic knowledge of French is usually required
- Visa and enrollment procedures can be complex and time consuming
- Some degrees do not transfer to some other countries
- Finding work for tuition and other expenses is currently difficult for non-national and non-EU based students
- Homesickness

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Are There Really Jobs in France

By Escapeartist Staff - France / May 11 • Categorized as [Living Overseas](#) • [Download Print Friendly PDF](#)



Working France for a Lifestyle

France is one of the top destinations in Europe for several millions of tourists from all around the world due to its many tourist attractions and to its timeless cultural heritage that appeals to people of all ages. But France is also a great market for people looking for employment. This of course, is due to the great employment regulations that this European country offers all its citizens.

Here's a deeper look at employment in France and its most important aspects

One of the very convenient aspects about finding employment in France, is that regardless if you are a local or a foreigner (provided you have the proper documentation in the case of foreigners) you can look for either a temporary jobs or a part time one. And if you are hoping to advance your career and keep moving upwards with it in France, this is also possible.

Prerequisites

Finding employment in France could not be easier for French citizens, but it is also quite easy to accomplish if you happen to be a foreigner, although it can be dramatically easier for members of the EEC (European Economic Community) when compared to people from the rest of the world.

When it comes to ECC members, there is a free movement of labor that allows all members of this community to find employment and work in France and in any other countries that are also members. Now, for those who are not members of the EEC, the required documentation would be a Letter of Employment (or a Carte de Sejours in French) from a company in France plus a valid working visa issued by a the French Embassy or Consulate.

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Employment Types

Regardless of the conditions and requisites for taking a job in France, every single employment offer is carried with a full contract between the parts (employee and employer). This is the lowdown of the three most important types of employment contracts in France:

1. **Contrat a Dure Indetermine:** This type of contract is also known as CDI in France, and when signing it, both parts commit to work together for an unlimited amount of time. Most people visiting France looking for employment, seek out this type of contract the most, but is can be quite difficult to obtain it directly. However, most of the people who obtain it, do so after being hired as temporarily at first.
2. **Contrat a Dure Determine:** Also known as a CDD, this type of contract is required for jobs that are taken for a pre set amount of time. It is usually used for seasonal jobs or for jobs that require personnel for very specific time periods. The CDD can be renewed up to 2 times, after which it needs to become a CDI.

This type of contract is of course, very beneficial and even ideal for people looking for something temporary, but it is also very strict, and anyone who signs this type of contract in France and does not honor it (by walking out of the job for example), will be legally required by his or her employee to repay the company all wages earned up to that moment.

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1. **Contract Nouvelle Embauché:** This type of contract is also known as the CNE, and it is being used more often by French businesses as of late, since it is fully valid long term contract, but that requires a two-year trial period so the French employer can fully know and test his or her employee skills and his/her contribution to the company. It also offers double the advantages for both parties involved, since on one side the employer is free to dismiss the new employee if he does not meet his/her expectations, and on the other side, new employees know that they have secure employment for at least 2 years, with even the possibility of getting a CDI.

Finding Employment in France

If you didn't arranged your employment previously with a French company, you can always go the "traditional way" and look for employment like just about everyone else does, which is by preparing a well written resume and getting ready for an interview. The most common ways to find jobs in France are through both local newspapers and websites, as well as through "Pole Emploi", which is the name for French Employment Offices that can be around all around France.

One thing to note though, is that the more knowledge about the language you have, the more chances you will have to get a better employment.

Wages for Employment in France

While every French company or business is free to set its own wages for employees, there is a minimum employment wage in France that is regulated by the French Government. These minimum wages are called "Salarie Minimum de Croissance" (or SMIC for short), and are set at around 8.86 Euros per hour of labor. The SMIC in France is updated every year in the month of January, and one of the most important benefits it offers workers around France is that the percentage of the yearly increment on the SMIC cannot be lower than the percentage of inflation of the past year.

This measure ensures employees always receive the same value for the work done, as well as giving companies a fair indicator to estimate future increments in salaries.

Other than that, wages are paid at least once every 30 days, mostly at the end of each month, and payment is made through either check or deposit into the employee's bank account. On top of that, a slip is usually handled to all employees that provides very detailed information on all the charges applied to their salaries.

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Touring France in Style

While most people who have never been to Europe before may think of Paris as their initial destination, to learn about the French people and culture remember to include 'paths not taken' into your travel plans and venture into the more intimate and amazing places France has to offer.

Linda, the editor of a reputable travel website, went on a more personal journey touring the South of France. In her account of this short tour, Linda writes of the wonderful week she spent touring the regions of Arles, Vichy and the Cevennes, taking her time to explore every place and most of all, to enjoy life by delighting in the exquisite and intimate lodgings she stayed in and

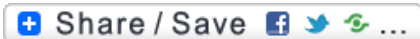
stories of the unique French cuisine that she tried.

Her experience is definitely not like what the average tourist will most commonly experience themselves, since she takes a far calmer and contemplative approach to touring the south of France, discovering great museums (like the The Réattu Museum is Arles' musée des beaux arts, which contains 57 Picasso drawings for example), taking cooking lessons, and looking for restaurants in places where only locals go, while choosing specifically off-season dates in order to have an even quieter and more enjoyable experience.

To learn more about Linda's journey and the adventures of other Escapeartist readers in France please Escapeartist France website: [CLICK HERE](#)

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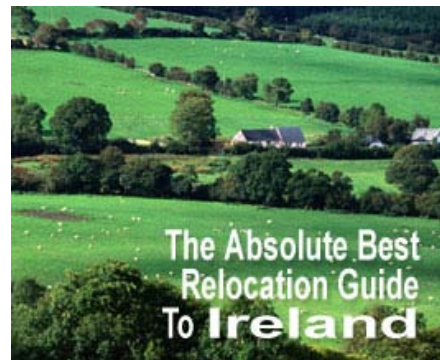


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Top Communities in France

By Escapeartist Staff – France / May 11 • Categorized as [Living Overseas](#) • [Download Print Friendly PDF](#)



Living in the Romance of France

France is considered by many as one of the most prosperous countries not only of the European Union, but also of the entire world. Also known as the French Republic, this European country is bordered by Belgium, Luxemburg, Germany, Monaco, Italy, Switzerland, Andorra and Spain and, due to its strategic location within the continent, France has acquired tremendous power within the region, which in turn has helped it gain great influence over the surrounding countries.

On top of that, its economic solidness and the tremendous strength of its cultural heritage has gained France the admiration of both old and new generations, which have

made it in turn one of the top destinations of choice when it comes to choosing not only a vacationing site, but also a place to live. It also helps, of course, that the French enjoy one of the lowest retirement age averages in the region, as well as the best healthcare system in the entire Europe.

But behind its economic strength and its vast cultural and gastronomical heritage, the secret of France's unity resides in the cohesiveness of its communities. Communities in France are very integrated, and they are usually composed of a city and its suburbs. However, contrary to other countries that applied similar ways of internal organization, communities in France are relatively new, having just appeared in the mid 20th century. But even so, their tremendous success cannot be denied.

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Communities were also one of the smartest choices made by the French administration, since before them, they had tried (unsuccessfully) to merge small suburbs into larger entities. So, with the advent of communities, the French Government managed to finally get the cooperation and the better administration of these smaller suburbs.

Currently there are 16 urban communities in France, which have around 8 million inhabitants. Let's take a look at the most important of them:

- **Urban Community of Lyon:** Also known as the Gran Lyon, this community is the largest in France and is composed of 57 smaller communes.
- **Urban Community of Lille Metropole:** This community stands out due to its great management of its transport system (comprised of busses, trams and a metro system) and of its environmental efforts. It was one of the first to be founded and is composed of 85 small cities and villages. One of the most pressing issues that this community is facing nowadays, is that it borders with the Belgium country, which means that certain things might not be totally under their control.
- **Urban Community of Marseille:** A community that takes its name from the city of Marseille (which it houses), it is one of the most independent communities. However, it is also perceived as one of the poorest ones. This has led to some small inner conflicts and to the initiative (on the part of its smaller communes) to abandon this community.
- **Urban Community of Bordeaux:** As its name suggests, this community is home to the famous city of Bordeaux and most of its suburbs, but not all of them. It is home to more than 750,000 of inhabitants and is one of the most prosperous communities of France.
- **Urban Community of Greater Toulouse:** Known also as just The Grand Toulouse, this community of more than 600,000 citizens houses the city of Toulouse and most of its suburbs, and was created just recently, in the year 2009. However, due to some political issues, some smaller (but very important)

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communes, have refused to join it.

- **Urban Community of Nice:** This particular community encompasses the popular city of Nice and the majority of its suburbs. The community of Nice faces the also tremendously popular French Riviera, which has given this small region a huge appeal with tourists.
- **Urban Community of Strasbourg:** This particular community gathers the city of, Strasbourg and some of its suburbs. However, as some of the communities mentioned above, this one also has some of its metropolitan area on German territory, which has caused some governability issues that are being handled somehow efficiently by the specially-created Strasbourg-Ortenau eurodistrict.

All of these communities work based on the concept of "intercommunality", which is a form of cooperation between communities that aims to empower them with the use of legal regulations that are not be available for the use of each individual community. Now, within the concept of intercommunality there exist 2 types of structures: communities with and without fiscal power.

Intercommunalities without fiscal power are far more flexible in their regulations, and usually depend on the creation of syndicates in order to gather some financial contributions since they do not have their own taxes. The problem that this type of intercommunalities face is that communes that integrate them can freely leave the syndicate at any time, which makes their plans far less reliable . On the other hand, due to their flexible nature, syndicates can be formed almost overnight with any particular objective.

On the other hand, we have intercommunalities with fiscal power, which are given funds from taxes in order to carry out their own projects. However, with the availability of tax funds, also come a series of responsibilities for the communities that integrate this type of intercommunalities, like the proper management of their transport system, the development of housing projects and the implementation of environmental protection plans as well. Now, since funds are managed by the main communities of these intercommunalities, this leaves smaller communes without much authority over important matters.

As you have seen, while in theory it might not sound as efficient as other internal organization methods, the truth is that management through these smaller communities has come to be extremely effective, and all of France is divided into these. The funny thing is, however, that while extremely important for its internal organization, these communities and their differences stay completely invisible for visitors, so they can focus on enjoying this beautiful country.

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The Passion Play in Paris

By Escapeartist Staff – Paris, France / May 11 • Categorized as [Living Overseas](#) • [Download Print Friendly PDF](#)



Discovering Paris the Unexpected Way

Paris is often referred to as “The City of Lights,” a title it surely deserves, and not just for its numerous monuments and the beauty of the Eiffel Tower that lights up the night sky, but because some decades ago it was a haven for some of the world’s brightest expatriates who gathered in Paris to share French wine and discuss topics of the day. Today, this multicultural environment can still be felt in this European capital and it is as alluring as ever.

Paris’ mixture of beauty, culture and eclectic people is exactly what an EscapeArtist writer, Robin, found so irresistible about Paris, a city that she never imagined she would be interested in, but a place that found its way into

her heart and mind in the most unexpected ways.

In Robin’s account of what brought her to love this cosmopolitan city, she describes the way in which even the most mundane details in Paris carry those bohemian characteristics that only a world capital can convey. And that is just the beginning of her adventures because we also learn how she fell in love, how she struggled to learn the language and how even something as simple as having a cup of coffee became a transformative experience in Paris.

Of course, she also visited one or two tourist spots in the City of Lights, but she only felt truly at home when she escaped from the common destinations and explored the cultural atmosphere left imprinted in the Parisian air by the countless artists and writers that called Paris home in the past.

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France: Romancing the Legal System

By Escapeartist Staff - France / May 11 • Categorized as [Living Overseas](#) • [Download Print Friendly PDF](#)



French Law Love it or Leave it

Law in France can be quite different from what people are used to see in countries like the U.S. for example. The way law is practiced in France is in fact, very similar to the way most countries around the world practice it. The main difference in the way French practice law is that all lawyers work under 2 main titles, Avocat and Notaire, which are the French for Lawyer and Notary/Solicitor. Avocats are the ones who practice law as usual, like filing claims, tending to the needs of their clients (both people or corporations) and handling all kinds of litigation. Notaries on the other hand, provides help and advice with paperwork-related law, like wills or property transfers.

Now, despite having just 2 main titles, French lawyers work in various different legal fields, specializing in particular branches of law, but always keeping their main title of lawyer or Notary intact. And not only that, but in France (maybe more than in any other European country) several other professions like Real Estate agents, Accountants, Consultants and may others are deeply intertwined and regulated by particular French legislative provisions.

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As you can see from this description, the system in which law is practiced in France can seem a little too general on paper, and can even be confusing for people who is not used to it, but in practice it is very efficient, and French law has been practiced this way for centuries now.

There are of course, many fields of law in France. Let's take quick look of the most important ones.

- **Buying or selling a French company:** This is one of the most frequent reasons why people use lawyers in France. Whenever buying a business in France, you can choose to buy either the shares or the goodwill of a company. However, whenever acquiring a company in France, you should always consider that you will also acquire both its assets and its liabilities. And when selling a company in France, several guaranties will be requested from you, and they all will be inspected and subject to French law. In short, no matter your nationality, if selling a French company, you will have to abide by French law.
- **Hiring and firing employees:** This is also one of the main aspects covered by French law, and it can be especially delicate when dealing with foreign employees. In those cases, there must always exist a contract of employment, and while a translation can be issued to the employee, the original French copy will always prevail. Now, whenever firing an employee, according to the law in France, it must always be done for a specific reason, and it must be one recognized by the French Statute.
- **Litigation:** Litigation in France can be either criminal or civil, but the later is far more common. Litigation is also one of the aspects where French law differs vastly from this practice in the U.S. In France (and in the vast majority of countries in the world), each party files a claim in written form through their lawyers, instead of addressing the judge directly. Also, in French litigations, oral statements and advocacy has almost no place in a trial and juries are also inexistent as well.
- What is even more shocking for people from the U.S. is that judgment is never dictated immediately, being instead reserved until weeks or even months after the hearing. Once a decision has been reached, it is communicated in written form to both parts.
- **Immigration and visas:** While the French Government has always been quite open to receive people from other countries, in the last decade the country has experienced a dramatic increase of its foreign labor force, most of which is unqualified. This has led France to somewhat tighten its immigration laws, making it especially difficult for unqualified labor workers to enter the country. On top of that, the French Government has also made it more difficult to acquire the French nationality via marriage. On the other hand, the French Government has made the procedures for the entrance of professionals and other qualified workers easier.

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- This branch of French law can be extremely dense, and it entails several kinds of procedures, like Entry Permits, Short and Long Stay Visas, Working Visas, Family Immigration, French Nationality, Dual Nationality and even Asylum in the French country.
- **Taxes:** Tax law can be quite cumbersome to handle in France due to the many different kinds of taxes that people deals with in different scenarios. The most common are the TVA (equivalent to the VAT), the IRPP, a tax paid by everyone who occupies a property, who owns a business and many others.
- **Trademarks:** As is well known by most people, France is home to some of the best and most renowned brands in the world, which include almost every product from perfumes to designer clothes. This has fostered an extremely safe environment, where all registered brands are very well protected. And one of the most positive aspects of trademark laws in France, is that it allows anyone to register his/her own trademark for protection by complying with just a few steps.

As mentioned above, the law in France can be very different from what people are used to in many countries, especially in the U.S. But in general, every law is in place to protect the country and it citizens, so whenever faced with any situation that deals with French law, you should always seek the advice and services of French lawyers that specialize in the matters you need to attend.

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Things to do While Visiting France

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The Best of France

- Le Clarisse
- Maison Prunier (fish and seafood)

Best Paris Restaurants

What determines the best restaurant in Paris is, of course, a matter of personal preference. To begin your search, *The Best Restaurants in Paris Guide* suggests:

- 58 Tour Eiffel
- Palace Elysée
- Chez Julien
- Lasserre
- Chez Catherine
- Auberge Nicolas Flamel
- Bizen (international cuisine)
- Bouillon Racine

Top Paris Night Clubs

Clubbing, nightlife and variety are synonymous with Paris. The variety of clubs is endless but almost everyone is familiar with the Cabaret Moulin Rouge and its red windmill. If you compare listings and reviews for other best French nightclubs, you will consistently find:

- Batofar
- Chacha
- Le Baron
- Le Queen
- Les Bains

Museums

Paris is home to a variety of museums, many of which contain famous French and other art and artifacts from the Middle Ages to the present day. Museums that you won't want to miss include:

- Louvre
- Musée Rodin (Rodin Museum)
- Musée d'Orsay (decorative arts)
- Musée National Pablo Picasso (Picasso Museum)
- Musée National du Moyen Age (Museum of the Middle Ages)

Festivals

Celebrations in France are usually large-production events. Though there are literally thousands throughout the country throughout the year, some of the best known are:

- Cannes Film Festival
- French Open
- Tour de France
- Nice Jazz Festival

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- Bastille Day
- Fête des lumières (Festival of Lights)

Amusement Parks

Amusement parks are very popular in France. Four that are consistently listed as top places to visit in France are:

- Disneyland
- Puy de Fou
- Parc Asterix
- Futuroscope

Other favorite parks are:

- Le Pal
- Nigloland
- OK Corral
- Parc Saint Paul
- Walibi Aquitaine
- Walibi Lorraine
- Walibi Rhone-Alpes

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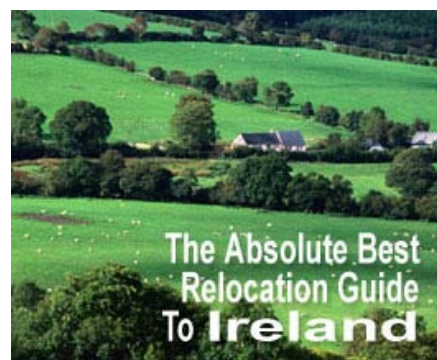
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Setting Up Your Business in France

By Escapeartist Staff – France / May 11 • Categorized as [Asset Protection](#) •  [Download Print Friendly PDF](#)



The ABC's of Doing Business in France

One of the most challenging aspects of doing business abroad is the tremendous effort required to overcome all the cross-cultural aspects when adapting to the culture of the new country. This is why it is considered of utmost importance to ponder all possible scenarios and consider every aspect of the country to visit in order to ensure that all negotiations run smoothly.

Now, France is a country that can be very complex due to its many subtleties. So, when doing business in France, visitors are highly advised to learn about the main differences when it comes to French business practices, protocol and any special negotiation techniques. Also, French are immensely proud of the quality of their cuisine, so it is also advisable to learn about table etiquette in order

to be ready in case there is a business lunch or dinner.

Considering all these, here are some guidelines in order to face all these cultural differences and overcome any potential obstacles that might show up while doing business in France.

- **Language:** Language should be the focus of anyone planning to do business in France regardless if it is for just a few days or for the long term. This is because the French take enormous pride in their language, so anyone who does not speak it at least with mild fluency runs the risk of being disregarded by his/her French colleagues or business associates. Also, another reason why learning French is important even if not being able to learn it proficiently, is that it is a great way to show every possible French business associate that you care and respect their country's culture and language.
- **Formal Business Behavior:** One of the aspects that puzzles people doing business in France, is how formal business communication can be. The reason for this is that French people follow very strict business protocols and behaviors, so they can appear somewhat unfriendly and even cold to those not used to the French way of doing business. However, this type of behavior will be found only on the surface, where there seems that almost no personal relationships are going on. But beneath all of this, there is a very complicated network of personal relationships and subtleties that make everything work smoothly.
- **Meetings and Introductions:** The first thing that you should do when meeting someone new is to shake his or her hand firmly and always looking the person in the eyes. Also, when just introduced to some possible business partner or associate, French will usually introduce themselves by their last names, so you should call them using their last name until they ask you to use their first names. Another important thing to consider is the use of titles. Thankfully, in France they are not use even as near as much as they are used in other countries, so generally, sticking with Monsieur or Madame should be more than enough in formal situations.

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Now, for more personal/informal situations introduction rules in France vary greatly, and French usually resort to kissing on the cheeks after they already become acquainted with someone who is now part of their social circle.

Another very important thing to consider whenever meeting people for either business or socially, is to dress well. With very few exceptions, people from all over the world think that just because they are dressed with a suit they are dressed well, but countries like Italy, and even more so France, are countries that are extremely fashion conscious. Of course, this doesn't mean you have to go to the next Hugo Boss store and buy everything, but you do have to make sure that every single thing that you are wearing is of quality and in pristine condition. People in France draw a lot of information from a person according to his/her appearance, and a careless or untidy look will instantly

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project the wrong image. A great way to learn about dressing well is to buy fashion magazines or business dressing guides (available for both men and women) and take ideas from there, as well as from French people surrounding you and that you see are elegant and stylish.

- **Culinary Culture:** One of the aspects all of France is most proud of, is their culinary culture. This attachment and pride for their food can be also experienced in almost every business situation. Of course, a traditional French meal is not near as simple as a regular meal would be on most countries, since in France, a regular business meal will usually consist of an appetizer, a main meal (with French cheese and wine included), a dessert and a cup of coffee, and it can take up to more than 2 hours time. This serves a purpose of course, which is relationship building in a warm and more informal environment.

As for table etiquette in France, whenever sitting at the table, wait for the host to say the words "bon appétit" before you start eating. Also remember to keep your wrists (but never your elbows) on the table. Also, another subtlety that you should know about, is that it is not well seen to add too much condiments (either salt, pepper or any kind of sauce) to the meal you eat, since people around you can think that you don't like the food and, if you know the chef, you might be offending him/her too.

Lastly, while all of the advice mentioned above can be quite strict, you should always consider that France is a country that (maybe more than any other) likes to enjoy life. So every aspect of both business and personal relationships can be somewhat flexible, like when it comes to punctuality or to doing business on holidays. But finding the perfect balance while at the same time learning all the subtleties that France has to offer, is part of the full experience of doing business in France.

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Shopping Paris is Fabulouso

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Shop til you Drop in Paris

Shopping as Parisians Shop: A Guide to Fun, Inexpensive Shopping in the Most Cosmopolitan City in the World.

Many may think that shopping in Paris would be the dream of a lifetime. But, it's more affordable than you might think! That's precisely the point that Rachel, a writer for EscapeArtist tells us about in the account of her shopping trips to Paris, the City of Lights. She explains to us how Paris can be not just **inexpensive**, but actually a tremendously fun place to do your shopping regardless if you are a woman looking for stylish clothing or a man searching for the best antiques.

What makes Rachel's account so appealing is that contrary to other people who shop in France that will tell you to go to the same places again and again, Rachel offers tips and advice that are only known to the locals; for example, how going to the market at the right time to save you a lot when you go shopping for groceries. Or, how flea markets are an entirely different (and better) experience than what they are in other parts of the world . . . if you know how to search properly.

Lastly, Rachel also tells us about a museum in France where you can go shopping, and how to be truly ready when going shopping in Paris, since this is a city where its people value appearance and taste tremendously.

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