

Summarizing France in one word is hard: while “aaaaahhhh” seems appropriate it doesn’t quite cover it. “Mmmm” also works well for its food and wine. **Quelle que soit, take this Inside Scoop with you to keep you on track.**

travel: delighting in the spirit of adventure • a vacation from home to explore places that are not your home • knowing life is different, knowing this is a joy of travel • enjoying the journey, not just the destination • a privilege best used with patience, humour and curiosity • fun • coming home with great tales •

Going to Paris?

That might sound odd as who goes to France without going to Paris, but many don’t—they’ve been or save it for a special trip (honeymoon?). If you’re going, make sure to take Maritime Travel’s Inside Scoop: Paris. Note: while health care is terrific, if you’re not a European Union citizen, “it is imperative” says France, you buy insurance before go. Maritime Travel medical and cancellation/interruption insurance covers you.

Your Counsellor

Our knowledge and experience help turn dreams into first-rate vacations. Ask your counsellor about any details, including:

- airport information/transfers
- hiring local travel services
- must see locales
- a few handy bon mots...

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Inside Scoop: FRANCE

Know before you go: travel isn’t just your destination, it’s also the journey

France is one fine country for discovery, but plan ahead to secure lodging and in-country travel. Some helpful tips:

- Be realistic: we know you want value balancing choices and amenities with budgets. No matter what, aim to relax and enjoy. Special requests are requests only for such upgrades as a room with an sea view.
- Be aware of cell phone roaming charges. Consider buying a télécartes for use at phone booths. Internet/wi-fi access is widely available; consider Skype to call home.
- France uses the Euro €—order some from your bank before you go. Banks change funds for a fee and ATMs take Canadian debit cards (confirm with your bank) for a fee (~\$5) so don’t change small amounts. Credit cards are widely used.
- Smaller stores, cafés, markets and taxis don’t like large denominations euros, so make sure you have smaller ones on hand.
- You’ll need adapter plugs (voltage converter) for 220 volt outlets: if you forget, they’re available at stores and many hotels.
- Some might not think France is great for kids and teens but it clearly is; one simple reason being that as a bilingual country, Canada is well-respected and our kids learn a bit of French in school. Kids don’t worry about embarrassing themselves trying (unless maybe they’re in the teen years). If taking kids, involve them in plans, go online to find cool stuff they can choose to do. As teens get comfortable, let them sit at a separate café table and do their own ordering (good luck with them paying...).

Above all, travel with a positive attitude—patience and a spirit of adventure will carry you through any experience!

Everywhere You Look, Temptation

We know France is a shoppers paradise (oh we know). Foodstuffs are favourite gifts; we suggest markets, antique shops and supermarkets (a hypermarché is way more “super”) that sell good affordable wine, picnic food, trendy and inexpensive clothes and well, luggage. Look for regional specialties such as lavender and olive oil products, real Champagne, locally made soaps, nougat and Dijon mustard with additions such as *cassis* (blackcurrant). Most shops are closed Sundays, some close Mondays and many close during lunch hours. Teens/young women love Cache-Cache, a chain offering adorable, trendy and very reasonably priced clothes. We won’t/can’t tell you what’s the best for adult women and men (because we can’t pick one). Also think scarves...

Touring in France

Plan your escapades in priority by listing out your top wishes: art? cities? villages? wine tour? cycling? wine tour? (did we ask that twice?). Draw a sensible route to avoid wasting travel time (and reduce zig-zagging) that leaves you enough time *while* you’re at a place and when (not if) you discover a great place to stop en route. As in any country, if you don’t speak French, just try—people often go out of their way to help when you’re polite and respectful, even if you just manage “Excusez-moi, où sont les toilettes?” and “Merci.”

- You *must* always keep your passport with you, www.cic.gc.ca/english/passport/index.asp. Keep copies of all documents elsewhere or photos on your cell phone of ID pages. Have all in your group take a hotel card (in case you get separated).
- A prix fixe 3-course meal (reduced price) is usually a good buy. Dining is outstanding even at simple cafés and wine bars.
- Renting a car is a terrific way to travel and maps bought at gas stations are invaluable (they include incredible detail). An International Drivers’ License is suggested: if you only drive automatics book ahead with your counsellor as standard transmissions are, well, standard. Don’t leave any valuables inside; keep doors locked and windows rolled up.
- Train travel is convenient and cost-effective with multi-day passes (ask your counsellor).
- One of the handiest items are resealable plastic bags whether keeping travel documents together, cheese from a picnic, open bags of trail mix or supplies for kids.
- Many cities have apps with all sorts of great tourist info. But also just wander—who wants to look (or see you) at that thing all day?

Your Airline

Sign up online for your airline(s) email or text flight notifications as your flight could be delayed (the plane might be flying in). CATSA notes "Travellers should arrive at the airport earlier than usual, exercise patience and **contact their airline for further information on their flight(s)**" www.catsa-acsta.gc.ca. Airline staff are on duty some 3hrs prior: due to staffing and security, check-in closes 1hr before departure. If late, you're not entitled to board (or a refund). Unless booked ahead, seats are first-come first-served. Many airlines have reciprocal "code-shares;" your ticket is for one airline, you travel on another's plane.

Check-in or carry-on baggage allowances and restrictions, size and weight restrictions vary by airline; see your airline's website. Also see www.catsa.gc.ca/home or ask your counsellor.



Get Packing Checklist and General Planning & Packing Tips at www.maritimetravel.ca/inside-scoops
 Your sense of adventure & humour!

Coming Home

Know the Canada Border Services Agency www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/travel-voyage/bgb-rmf-eng.html exemption limits for goods you bring home. For visits of 2 to 7 days you can bring \$800 worth (including alcohol and tobacco); the goods must be with you. For 7 days+, \$800 worth of goods can be with you and/or follow by mail, etc. Amounts must be noted in CAD. **Tips:** Those envelopes in hotels for writing letters? Take two: in one tuck in receipts for costs there, receipts for items coming home in the other. Write a rounded-up amount on the outside so you know what's spent (handy at customs). Also see Maritime Travel's Inside Scoop: Returning to Canada.



Websites and emails in blue are hyperlinked; just click!

Canadians: Emergency? Canada's Embassy in Paris: 35 avenue Montaigne, 75008, tel:+33 (0)1 44 43 2902. Consulates in Lille, Lyon, Monaco, Nice and Toulouse. Or call Global Affairs (collect if needed) 001-613-996-8885 sos@international.gc.ca www.canadainternational.gc.ca/france.

So Many Cities, Towns and Villages (and food), So Little Time...

With a population approximately double that of Canada, by land mass France could fit almost twice into Ontario. While its size makes it relatively easy to get around, the country is indeed filled with welcome diversions. Cities and towns are beautiful at night; there are often festivals, lights hang from trees, fireworks when you least expect them and music from who knows where...so make sure you get out in the evenings as well as day haunts. Each region is distinctive; from **Alsace** of the north east to the **Pyrénées** of the south that borders Spain. Eastern border towns such as **Strasbourg** and beautiful **Colmar** have noticeable food and German language influences (take Maritime Travel's Inside Scoop: Popular Phrases).

Juno Beach Centre www.junobeach.org is a bilingual museum/cultural site at Courseulles-sur-Mer by the D-Day beaches, honouring Canadians who served in WWII. Closed December 25/each January, opening hours vary by month. A memorable section is the bricks bought to commemorate individual veterans.

A drive along the south coast from **St. Tropez** to **Monaco** will leave you with memories of stargazing and sights of the rich and famous. To splurge on a very memorable ride, ask your counsellor to book you on the helicopter that flies over that gorgeous coast from the airport in **Nice** to Monaco. **Toulouse** (in the south west) is a rugby powerhouse and like Paris, offers city-wide bicycle rental, VélôToulouse, by the day or week (month, year): the city is also at one end of the **Canal du Midi** (connecting the Canal de Caronne), a shortcut between the Atlantic and Mediterranean. If you want to take a barge or boat, this is a great waterway to travel among towns. With the www.lyoncitygreeter.com program, **Lyon** offers visitors the opportunity to see it through the eyes of its residents, giving you hot tips such as attending Lyon's annual Dance Festival in September.

Carcassonne is a walled city in the south, another walker's find. The fortress is lit at night, its ramparts and 43 towers an impressive sight. Every July 14 (Bastille Day), 25 minutes of fireworks form a stunning display; watch from the banks of the Aude River. A little-known fact of **Nimes** is its historical importance in the making of that fashionable fabric, De Nimes, meaning "of Nimes"...Denim (your teen probably won't admit that's neat). It enjoys a geographical advantage as the regions of **Languedoc**, **Provence**, **Carnague** and **Cévennes** meet, approximately halfway between **Montpellier** and **Avignon**. Since construction of Avignon's **Palais des Papes** began in AD 1252, this Gothic palace has been in constant renovation, the largest in Europe. The **Pont d'Avignon** is a famous medieval bridge. Montpellier is a contemporary city with lots of cool activities and a terrific fine arts museum. From here, it's easy to get to the Mediterranean and waterfront areas and towns such as **Sète**. Along with other artists, **Arles** is a former home of Vincent van Gogh (it's now thought his ear was sliced off in a dual with Paul Gauguin, an expert fencer...). See the Yellow House and exhibits.

Wine Lovers Guaranteed More "Love"

While there are arguments about superior wine (don't mention that "event mal" with California), French wine rules—terroir, microclimates and varietals make it a never ending country of yummy (a technical term for great wine) finds. While much focus has been on areas such as Bordeaux and anyone can buy a great bottle of wine for \$50, look to lesser known areas for intriguing bargains. Smaller vigneron and wineries in **Languedoc-Roussillon**, **Loire**, **Rhône**—pretty much anywhere—offer great value. Literally head for the hills and small towns for novel appellations and varieties. If you love **Champagne** visit that town, **Gigondas** for reds, **Chablis** for its mineral whites (eat oysters at a market) and **Châteauneuf-du-Pape** (have lunch on the brasserie's patio off the main square). If you've hated rosé, this is where to make it all better: try a glass with a light lunch—it's a refreshing overlooked food friendly wine (from a bad rap years ago). As anywhere, don't drink and drive; the blood alcohol limit is .05% (.02% novice drivers).

Our 24/7 Emergency Service

We constantly survey airlines, local tour companies and hotels to ensure they meet our customer service standards, so don't let a problem ruin your holiday. Nearly all issues can be handled quickly on site—first seek help from the venue's local staff. Otherwise, call our Emergency Travel Service at **1-888-551-1181**. Deposits are non-refundable and non-transferrable. Schedule changes can occur and airlines and tour operators have the right to change flight and/or tour times, alter, combine services or substitute accommodations. Your counsellor will work with you to ensure you receive information as soon as possible and ensure satisfaction. See your brochure and ticket terms and conditions.

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