

# EXPAT GUIDE: **FRANCE**

INCLUDES PARIS CITY GUIDE

This guide offers information and advice if you are moving to France.

Click on the different tabs to find out about anything from tax rules and banking to education and cultural highlights.



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*We care for the lives in our hands, and are dedicated to providing all the insurance services, help and advice you need to keep yourself and your family in the best of health. Our dedicated team respects everyone's individuality, culture, privacy and dignity, and aims to provide a personal service you can rely on throughout your Bupa International membership.*



## Moving to France

Many expats dream of moving to France. Their imaginations are fired by visions of long country lunches, people-watching from cafés, strolls in lavender-scented Provence, sunbathing on the beaches of Nice, and immersion in the cultural riches of Parisian art and couture.

The French nation prides itself on its distinct identity and language, and feels little need to accommodate outsiders. The language is the key barrier and any expat wanting to make France home will need to become fluent in French.

Paris and Lyon are justly celebrated for their fine dining. These two cities vie yearly for the honour of being the top culinary destination in France. Regional specialties are celebrated and brought to the cities for everyone to try; expats willing to let their taste buds do their exploring for them will seldom be bored.

Expats moving to France might not expect to find a vibrant business environment. However, this nation has produced the 5th largest economy in the world and its capital, Paris, has the largest city economy on mainland Europe. Expats account for 19% of workers in Paris, and businessmen value the new skills a foreigner can bring.

The country itself is old and highly cultivated. Fields and farms, elegantly bridged rivers, chateaux, estates and ancient cobbled towns dot the landscape. Bordeaux and Burgundy, the country's famous wine centres, bring endless vineyards rolling over their gentle hills.

### Shipping and removals

France has plenty of ports and a high-density rail system. This means that shipping to the country is a fairly easy. Be sure to check the local embassy for customs restrictions.

Usually with removals you must keep all documentation provided by the shipping company. These items include, invoices, carrier arrival notices, and inventories. Often these are needed to track and reclaim goods. Most countries have differing licensing systems for motor vehicles, and it can be required to have a new road worthiness certificate or to make a new tax payment.

The BAR (British Association of Removers) are one of the watchdogs for the industry, and it can be useful to see what it has to say about a chosen removals company.

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## Working in France

Below you will find information about:

- [Applying for a job](#)
- [Banking, money and taxes](#)
- [Visas and work permits](#)
- [Business culture](#)
- [Working hours](#)
- [Public holidays](#)
- [Employment contracts](#)

France can be a difficult place to find employment as it is almost essential that you speak French. It is possible to work as an au pair or language teacher while gaining enough proficiency in French to move into the general job market. The French prefer to do business with friends, and most people find employment through networking and alumni organisations.

France has one of the busiest tourism industries in the world. More tourists visit Paris than anywhere else on the globe. Those with experience in hospitality – waiters, bartenders, hotel staff – will find plenty of job opportunities if they look for summer work.

### **Applying for a job**

The accepted etiquette for a job application is to leave a CV at the front desk, and then to pester the company until they make an appointment for an interview. Be polite but persistent. France is different from the Anglophone countries in that the French expect to be pestered. It can be useful for an expat to follow up an application with a number of calls.

### **Banking, money and taxes**

Opening a bank account in France is simple. The bank will expect a passport copy, a resident's permit, a proof of residency (a utilities bill should suffice), a reference from a bank in which another account is held, and an amount to deposit into the account. Non-residents will also have to provide a signature witnessed by a solicitor. There are minor differences between a non-resident and resident account, with the former subject to more restrictions.

Standard bank accounts in France pay no interest, so it is worth opening a specific deposit account for any significant savings. By law, banks have to tell you the full extent of the charges they levy in an annual statement. Some banks will charge for different transactions and it is worth shopping around to find out which bank will most suit your lifestyle.

Once the account has been approved, a chequebook and debit card (carte bleu) will be issued. The carte bleu is accepted almost everywhere in France. A cheque in France is considered as cash, so a bounced check will result in a fraud report to the Bank of France. Post dated and open dated cheques are considered illegal.

"Compulsory deductions" is the combined term for income tax and social security deductions. Taxes are imposed on those who work, reside and invest in France. There exists a small tax on wealth applicable to a heritage of over €750,000. About 25 percent of a residents gross income will go into social security deductions. However, there is a further income tax of between 5 and 40 percent on net income. This progressive system means those with a high income will pay significantly more tax than a middle or low income worker. Those who own property or are self employed will be subject to additional taxes, which makes starting a business in France a slightly unattractive proposition.

All EU member states will pay VAT for goods taken out of the region when leaving the EU. For expats who only intend to stay a few years, it is worth contacting a VAT expert to discover what one will be entitled to claim, especially as this can translate into a hefty sum.

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### Visa and work permits

EU citizens do not need visa or work permits, although a residency permit is required for access to French social security. Non-EU citizens moving to France need a visa and a residents permit. French embassies and consulates are the places to apply for the visa, but the residency permit is only available in France. It is important to begin this process early as the French bureaucracy will take its time to process the request.

Note that the type of visa you have is seldom altered. A short-stay visa of three months cannot be changed into a long-stay visa. To become an expat in France an application for a residency permit must be lodged, but only after being granted a long-stay visa. This can be done at the local Foreigners Office or town hall. After three years living in the country you can apply for a permanent residency.

### Business culture

Business etiquette is important in France. A smart and fashionable personal appearance is essential, while punctuality is less vital and people are sometimes "fashionably late". Meetings are usually held over lunch, and the French love their food. As in most western countries, a handshake is the norm when meeting someone, and the French like to use the formal titles Monsieur (Mr), Madame (Mrs) and Mademoiselle (Ms).

### Working hours

The average working day in France is 9am to 6pm, but this is not a hard and fast rule. Many companies offer a shorter day in exchange for working over lunch. Lunch can be as long as two hours.

### Public holidays

	2011	2012
New Year's Day	1 Jan	1 Jan
Good Friday	22 Apr	6 Apr
Easter Sunday	24 Apr	8 Apr
Easter Monday	25 Apr	9 Apr
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Assumption of the Virgin Mary	15 Aug	15 Aug
All Saints' Day	1 Nov	1 Nov
Armistice Day	11 Nov	11 Nov
Christmas Day	25 Dec	25 Dec
2nd Day of Christmas	26 Dec	26 Dec

### Employment contracts

For an expat looking for permanent work, there are two types of contract to consider. The Contrat à durée indéterminée (CDI) is the full-time indeterminate term contract. There is a three-month trial period after which either the employer and the employee can terminate the contract. However, hiring someone with a CDI can be very expensive, and anyone on a CDI contract can expect a high degree of job stability. The Contrat à durée déterminée (CDD) is a fixed term contract which has a maximum limit of 18 months. After 18 months the employer is required to either terminate employment or offer a CDI contract to the employee. There are other contracts for short-term and part-time work which are usually agency or hospitality related.

Most contract workers can expect two extra cheques a year in December and June. A contract worker can also expect around five weeks of leave per year, worked out at two and half days per month worked. It is best to discuss leave before a contract is signed as the vacation days are only accumulated from 1 June to 31 May. Beginning work in April for instance, will only oblige an employer to offer five days leave until the next May. Incredibly, a company employee, having worked for the same company for three years, can apply for a year-long sabbatical. While unpaid, social security coverage is maintained, and the employee has the right to return to the same or equivalent position in the company.

An employer can propose an amendment to a contract based upon a change in economic circumstances. This must be done by registered letter, after which the employee has a month to file a refusal. A refusal will either result in a compromise, or a dismissal. Assuming the minimum conditions have been met, the employee is entitled to notice and redundancy pay.

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## Living and culture

Below you will find information about:

- [Cost of living](#)
- [Local customs](#)
- [Making friends in France](#)
- [Living and integration](#)

For information about Bupa International healthcare [click here](#).

The hardest adjustment for expats is the clash between romanticised expectations of France and the more mundane realities you can encounter. The reticent expat will find it difficult to adapt to French manners. Disagreement is expected, and even encouraged at times, with speakers barking out terse rejoinders. Despite this, no one would find it more surprising than the French to find that they had been accused of rudeness. In fact, French culture has evolved a complex set of conversational rules. It is not by chance that etiquette is a word of French origin.

The roadways in France can be a hazard and, while illegal, many French residents will simply park where they can, often driving cars up onto pavements.

Films are often dubbed into French. Most of the significant Hollywood actors have voice doubles who play their part in all their films. Again, without French, an expat can be left in a popular culture desert as even television will dub most imported shows. The key ingredient to overcoming the experience of culture shock in France is simply to learn the language.

### Cost of living

Paris and Lyon are both expensive to live in, with Paris taking the top spot as the most expensive city in France.

Utilities bills are comparable to those in the rest of Europe, but because of the monopoly held by the national telecoms provider, calls and broadband costs in France remain high. Electricity and gas are fairly cheap but air conditioning can be very expensive.

There is a 20% sales tax in France, but property taxes are lower than in the UK. This means that a sale of property in the UK can provide funds both for a new home in France as well as cash with which to renovate that property.

### Local customs

French culture is of particular importance to the local people and they flaunt this proudly.

As in many other countries sports are an important aspect of the local culture. The national sports in France are football, rugby and cycling, and traditional games such as pétanque are popular in village squares.

### Making friends in France

A foreigner in France will always be an outsider. However, the French consider friendships sacred and learning French customs and the language is essential to breaching any boundaries.

### Living and integration

Paris is the most popular city for expats in France. There are communities in which you can find a home away from home. There are also many facilities to make expat life easier, such as English expat magazines and English speaking institutions. While buying property in France can be an attractive option, doing it alone requires a willingness to integrate into French society.

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## Education and schools

### Education and schools in Paris

Paris has some of the best schools and educational facilities in the world. Expats placing their children in Paris' schools will find a high-quality, demanding level of education. Schooling in France is generally cheap or free, as even private schools and universities are often subsidised. However, non-residents will have to pay fees as the schools are paid for from taxes.

Schooling in France officially starts at age six, but many parents send their children to school much earlier. The collèges cater for 11-15 year olds, while the lycées are for the 15-18 year olds. The baccalauréat, or le bac, is the finishing diploma for French schooling and performance in this exam is what gives a student access to higher education.

There is a different schooling culture in France with academic excellence being highly stressed. Teachers consider school their domain and largely expect parents to stay away. A parent would do well to discuss these differences with their child before they enter into the schooling system.

### Grandes écoles and universities in Paris

The French system divides further education into the grandes écoles and universities with the former being more prestigious. The Ecole Polytechnique in the Latin Quarter and the Hautes Etudes Commerciales (HEC) of Paris are rated as the 10th and 5th best in the world, respectively. Unlike most other countries the universities in France are specialised with a student attending a university based largely upon their subject choice. For instance, the École Polytechnique is an engineering school while the HEC Paris is a business school. The University of Paris is one of the world leaders in the Humanities.

Public institutions, such as the Polytechnique have fees that are set, and subsidies from the government so costs are kept low. €200 per year would cover university for residents and citizens. For a private institution like HEC Paris, €16 000 per year is more likely. The school year starts in September and ends in July.

### Private schools in Paris

Many private schools provide education in French and in English, and some have contracts with the government. Often Roman Catholic government-contracted schools can cost as little as €300 per year, while the independent ones will cost more than €2,000.

### Links

- Guide to education: [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secondary\\_education\\_in\\_France](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secondary_education_in_France)
- Ecole Polytechnique: [www.polytechnique.fr](http://www.polytechnique.fr)
- American Private School: [www.asparis.org](http://www.asparis.org)
- Expat Forum: [www.justlanded.com/english/France](http://www.justlanded.com/english/France)
- English schooling: [www.eabjm.org](http://www.eabjm.org)
- University of Paris: [www.paris-sorbonne.fr/en](http://www.paris-sorbonne.fr/en)

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## Useful information

Below you will find:

- [Nice to know](#)
- [Embassy contact details](#)
- [Useful links](#)

### Nice to know

Time:

Local time in France is GMT + 1 hour (GMT + 2 hours from the end of March to the end of October).

Currency:

The euro (EUR, €) is the currency of France. It is divided into 100 cents. You can check the latest exchange rates here:

<http://www.xe.com/>

Electricity:

220 volts, 50Hz. Standard plugs used in France are European two-pins.

Language:

The official language is French, but English is spoken and understood.

Safety Information:

The crime rate in France is low. The only places that may be dangerous are the poorer areas of Paris and areas with large amounts of tourists where pick-pocketing can be a common crime.

Communications:

The international access code for France is +33, and the Paris area code is (0)1. International calls are made by dialling the network code (eg 00 for France Telecom) and then the relevant country code (eg 44 for the United Kingdom). Phone cards can be used on most public phones and purchased at local newsagents, probably the cheapest way for expats to call home. French mobile phone operators use GSM networks and most have roaming agreements with international mobile companies.

Emergencies:

112 is the emergency number used in France.

Climate:

France is a large country and the climate varies regionally. The south of France has a warm Mediterranean climate with hot summers and mild winters. Strong winds, known as "le Mistral", blow through the Cote d'Azur, Provence and the Rhone valley during winter and spring. Northern France, including Paris, has a temperate climate with warm summers, cold winters and rainfall throughout the year. On the west coast, from the Loire valley to the Pyrenees, the weather is milder but summers can be very hot.

### Embassy contact details

French Embassies:

- French Embassy, Washington DC, United States: +1 202 944 6000

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- French Embassy, London, United Kingdom: +44 (0)20 7073 1000
- French Embassy, Ottawa, Canada: +1 613 789 1795
- French Embassy, Canberra, Australia: +61 (0)2 6216 0100
- French Embassy, Pretoria, South Africa: +27 (0)12 425 1600
- French Embassy, Dublin, Ireland: +353 (0)1 277 5000
- French Embassy, Wellington, New Zealand: +64 (0)4 384 2555

#### Foreign Embassies in France:

- US Embassy, Paris: +33 (0)1 4312 2222
- British Embassy, Paris: +33 (0)1 4451 3100
- Canadian Embassy, Paris: +33 (0)1 4443 2900
- Australian Embassy, Paris: +33 (0)1 4059 3300
- South African Embassy, Paris: +33 (0)1 5359 2323
- Irish Embassy, Paris: +33 (0)1 4417 6700
- New Zealand Embassy, Paris: +33 (0)1 4501 4343

#### Useful links

##### Banking, Money and Taxes in France:

- List of Banks: [france.angloinfo.com](http://france.angloinfo.com)
- VAT information: [www.ricksteves.com/plan/tips/vat.htm](http://www.ricksteves.com/plan/tips/vat.htm)

##### Working in France:

- Agency for professionals Employment in France: [www.apec.fr](http://www.apec.fr)

##### Jobs portals:

- [jobs.justlanded.com/en/France/1](http://jobs.justlanded.com/en/France/1)
- [www.fusac.fr/en](http://www.fusac.fr/en)

##### Visa and Work Permits for France:

- Visa Portal: [www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en)

##### Shipping and Removals to France:

- BAR Portal: [www.bar.co.uk/Default.aspx](http://www.bar.co.uk/Default.aspx)
- France shipping portal: [www.armishaws.com](http://www.armishaws.com)
- Shipping Portal: [www.westwardfreight.com/France.htm](http://www.westwardfreight.com/France.htm)
- Useful info about moving to France: [http://www.americansinfrance.net/...](http://www.americansinfrance.net/)

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## Moving to Paris

Paris is the capital of France and a truly global city which hosts the headquarters of 37 Fortune 500 companies, and a number of global humanitarian and economic organisations. The City of Light's urban area is Europe's biggest city economy after London, and produces over a quarter of France's total GDP. Expats will find a plethora of options for both work and play.

Paris is one of the easiest cities in the world to navigate. The city is divided into 20 arrondissements (districts), each of which are given a number. Paris is fairly flat, except for the low hill of Montmartre, while the Seine river bisects then curls and caresses the city. Public transport in Paris is excellent with an extensive system of buses and trains. There is also a free bicycle system in place throughout the city.

### Shipping and removals

As always with removals it is important that all documentation is kept. Items such as invoices and carrier arrival notices are needed to track and reclaim goods. Motor vehicles might need to be reassessed on arrival so as to conform to local safety standards.

BAR (British Association of Removers) serve to keep the industry safe for consumers, and it is well worth checking out the chosen removals company on their site.

### Links

- BAR Portal: [www.bar.co.uk/Default.aspx](http://www.bar.co.uk/Default.aspx)
- France shipping portal: [www.armishaws.com](http://www.armishaws.com)
- Shipping Portal: [www.westwardfreight.com/France.htm](http://www.westwardfreight.com/France.htm)

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## Working in Paris

Below you will find information about:

- [Finding a job](#)
- [Banking, money and taxes](#)
- [Employment contracts](#)
- [Public holidays](#)
- [Visas and work permits](#)
- [Business culture](#)
- [Working hours and leave](#)

When moving to France you need a visa and a resident's permit. These can be applied for at French embassies and consulates around the world. It is important to begin this process early as it can take a while. EU citizens do not need any of these documents.

After being granted a long-stay visa you must apply for a residency permit, which can be done at the local Foreigners Office or town hall. A permanent residency permit can be applied for after three years of living in the country.

### Finding a job

Many people find employment through networking and alumni organisations and it can be a challenge to find work if you do not speak French. The French expect to be pestered, so it can be useful for an expat to follow up an application with a number of calls asking when an interview will be arranged.

Paris is also the corporate centre of France and hosts headquarters of many of the world's top firms. For those speaking both French and another language, Paris can be a good place to find a corporate job.

### Banking, money and taxes (France)

Opening a bank account in France is simple. The bank will expect a passport copy, a resident's permit, a proof of residency (a utilities bill should suffice), a reference from a bank in which another account is held, and an amount to deposit into the account. Non-residents will also have to provide a signature witnessed by a solicitor. There are minor differences between a non-resident and resident account, with the former subject to more restrictions.

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## Living and culture

Below you will find information about:

- [Accommodation](#)
- [Climate](#)
- [Cost of living](#)
- [Getting around](#)
- [Using the Velib](#)
- [Links](#)

For information about Bupa International healthcare [click here](#).

### Accommodation

Paris is a densely packed city, and each of its neighbourhoods has a distinct flavour and personality. Choice of location is more a matter of price and taste than public transport convenience. Facilities in Paris are important measures of an apartment's quality. For instance, it can be worth paying more for an apartment that is individually heated. Some landlords will turn off heating when they go to bed, leaving any night owl tenants to shiver.

**Arrondissements:** The 1st arrondissement is the isle on which the Notre Dame Cathedral and the Old City of Paris are situated. It also contains the ancient City of Lutetia which was occupied by the Romans, and now houses the world famous Musee Louvre. The city springs outwards in a spiral from arrondissement 1-20, meaning the number gives a solid clue to the a real location within the city. The lower the number of the arrondissement the closer to the centre of the city it is.

The 2nd arrondissement, the 8th – with the Champs Elysees and Arc de Triomphe – and the 9th form the business core of Paris. The 3rd and 4th share the strongly Jewish flavoured Le Marais containing the Picasso Museum. The 6th has some fine eateries and the 7th houses many of the worlds great fashion brands, such as Chanel and Versace. You will find the Eiffel Tower in the 7th arrondissement.

**Finding your apartment:** Expect to provide a passport, a national identity card, three months' salary slips and French bank account details. A full inventory of an apartment's condition should be taken on arrival. If the inventory on departure shows no damage then the full deposit should be returned. The deposit for an apartment is usually a full month's while you will be expected to pay two months' rent in advance. A tenant wishing to leave a rented property must give at least three months' notice to the landlord. A clause can be negotiated to make the required notice period shorter.

The law in France is tenant-friendly, meaning that evicting a tenant or raising rent on a property can be a difficult task for a landlord. When raising the rent, a letter must be sent to the tenant at least six months before the occasion, informing them of the landlord's intentions. The landlord also has to show that the rental increase is in line with market valuations of the apartment.

It is required by law to purchase an inexpensive rental insurance which will provide cover against theft, fire and any damage to the communal areas of buildings. If there are any problems the local town hall will provide information on the tenant's rights and options. It's important you register in the area where you live when first arriving.

**Renting an apartment:** There are plenty of furnished apartments available for short-term rent. It is possible to find a two-bedroom apartment for as little as €1,100, but expect it to be cramped. A single bedroom will cost from €800. For better deals it is worth looking in the 19th, 15th, and 13th arrondissements and outside of the city centre.

Unfurnished rentals in the central area start from around €1,500 for two bedrooms. The cheapest areas can be found in the north of Paris, with the south recently becoming more expensive due to gentrification.

It can be difficult to get an apartment in Paris because you have to prove you earn at least three times the rent and must show a variety of documents. A few landlords prefer foreigners, so expats will be first in line for some apartments.

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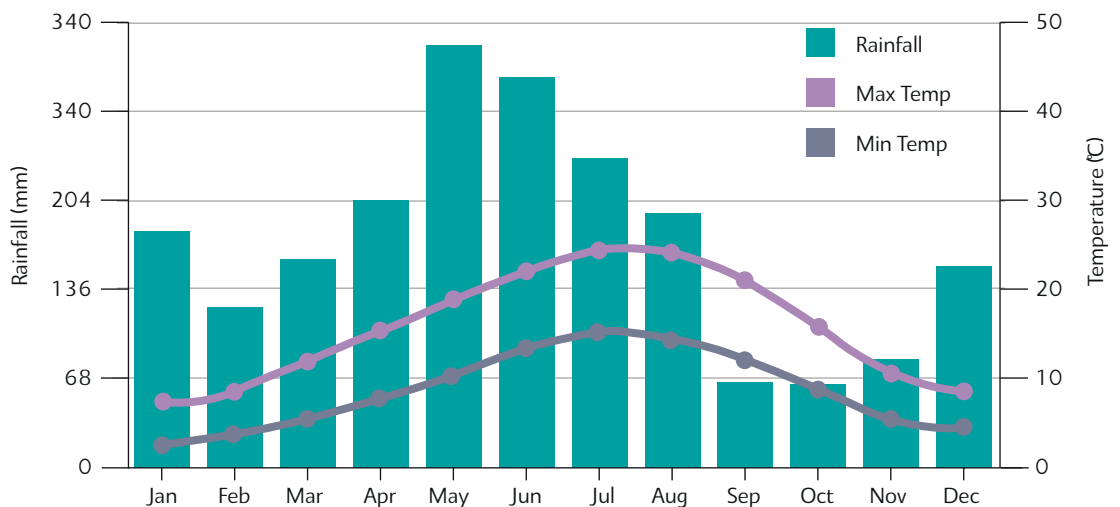
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## Climate

The Ile de France region, where Paris is located, has France's lowest rainfall but unexpected rain showers can occur through the year. Summer temperatures are mild to warm - with the occasional heat wave - while winters are cold with temperatures often falling below zero (32°F).

## PARIS



## Cost of living

Paris is the most expensive city in France. Utilities bills are comparable to those in the rest of Europe. Phone bills and broadband costs remain high because of the monopoly held by the national telecoms provider. Electricity and gas is fairly cheap but air conditioning can be very expensive.

There is a 20% sales tax in France, while property taxes are lower than in the UK. This means that a sale of property in the UK can provide funds both for a new home in France as well as cash with which to renovate that property.

## Getting around

Paris and France have the highest density of public transport in the world. A car is a genuine luxury. If personal transport is needed the 'Velib' free bicycle scheme allows rapid movement in areas otherwise not covered, and bicycles are well respected and accommodated for on the roads.

The train system is split in two with the Metro covering the city and the RER reaching into the suburbs. The Navigo smart card has replaced the Carte Orange that used to be the standard month-long pass. This pass allows the user onto any of the Parisian transport systems including the subway, express trains, trams, buses and even for the Velib bicycle system.

The Navigo travel card can be linked to a bank account which will be charged every month or as a pay as-you-go smart card. A month's pass for the whole of Greater Paris, zones 1-6, costs around €122.10, but the price varies according to which zones are crossed. For most living close to the city a €55.10 pass for zones 1 and 2 is sufficient.

## Using the Velib

Subscriptions cost €1/day, €5/week or €29/year. The first 30 minutes of every trip is free and cost up to €4 for each subsequent 30 minute period. If the bicycle is exchanged at another Velib site, the timer resets, which means that getting across the whole of Paris for €1 is possible.

## Links

Accommodation in Paris:

- Flatshare: [www.apartager.com](http://www.apartager.com)

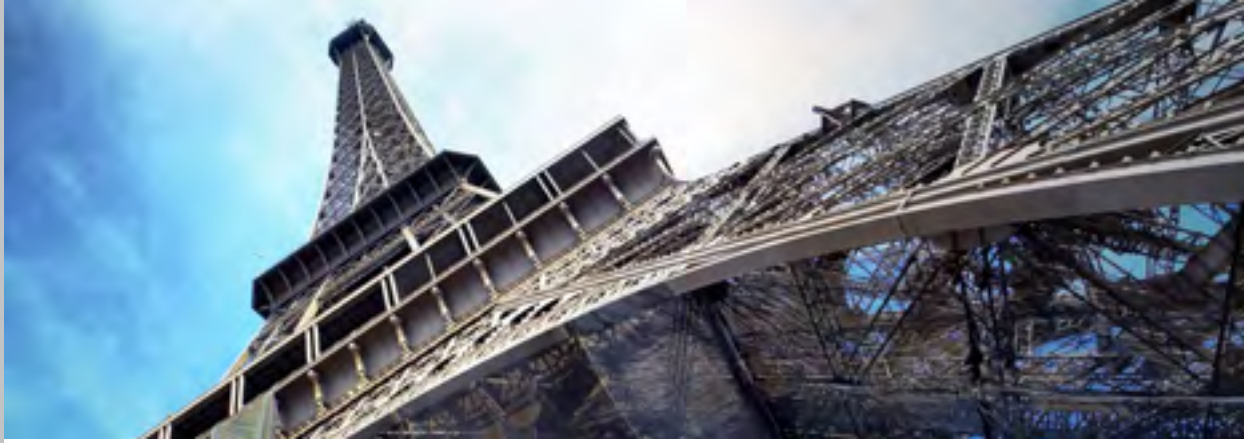
French classified ads:

- [www.avendrealouer.fr](http://www.avendrealouer.fr)
- [www.hestia.fr](http://www.hestia.fr)
- [www.marneweb.com/bnb/apt\\_desc.htm](http://www.marneweb.com/bnb/apt_desc.htm)
- [www.parisattitude.com](http://www.parisattitude.com)
- [www.apartmentsapart.com/paris\\_hotels/index.htm](http://www.apartmentsapart.com/paris_hotels/index.htm)
- [www.lodgis.com](http://www.lodgis.com)

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## See and do

Below you will find about:

- [Lifestyle and shopping](#)
- [See and do](#)
- [Attractions for kids](#)
- [Restaurants Annual events](#)

### Lifestyle and shopping

Paris offers a romantic, exciting lifestyle for expats to enjoy, with hundreds of first-class restaurants, some of the best shopping on earth and a stylish nightlife.

Browse the boutiques along Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré for some of the best in haute couture, or Rue Etienne Marcel for chic fashions. Champs-Élysées is home to a number of malls and to the famous Guerlain Parfumerie. Les Halles underground mall has cheap fakes and trendy clothes on sale. There are a couple of great flea markets near the city gates to peruse, and open-air markets throughout the city trading in fresh food produce, flowers and clothing.

### See and do

**Eiffel Tower:** The first stop in Paris has to be the world-famous Eiffel Tower, where stunning panoramic views of the city can be enjoyed from its top observation level.

<http://www.tour-eiffel.com> / Telephone: (01) 4411 2323 (recorded information)

**Notre-Dame:** Dating back to 1163, the Gothic cathedral of Notre-Dame is a quintessential Paris landmark and is a wonderful attraction to spend the day exploring.

[www.cathedraledeparis.com](http://www.cathedraledeparis.com) / Telephone: (01) 4234 5610

**Louvre:** One of the world's most famous art museums, the Louvre is a fascinating place to discover the beautiful paintings, sculptures and antiquities that have made their way here from all over the world.

[www.louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr) / Telephone: (01) 4020 5760

**Musée National Picasso:** The Picasso Museum houses a definitive collection of this wonderful artist's work including paintings, drawings, ceramics, sculptures and poetry.

Telephone: (01) 4271 2521

**Musée Rodin:** This museum features a collection of Auguste Rodin's marble sculptures, some of the most famous being The Kiss and The Thinker. There are also paintings by Van Gogh, Renoir and Manet at the museum.

[www.musee-rodin.fr](http://www.musee-rodin.fr) / Telephone: (01) 4418 6110

**Jardin des Plantes:** The expansive Jardin des Plantes is a beautiful botanical garden to relax in. The more adventurous can explore its Labyrinth maze.

Telephone: (01) 4079 5601

**Les Invalides:** Built by Louis XIV in 1670, the Les Invalides dome is the burial site for many of France's war heroes,

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including the famous Napoleon Bonaparte, and a fascinating (if somewhat morbid) Paris attraction.

[www.invalides.org](http://www.invalides.org) / Telephone: (0)1 4442 3877

**Pompidou Centre:** The Pompidou Centre has an ultramodern design, complete with glass elevators, and is home to the Musée National d'Art Modern, as well as cinemas and theatres hosting arts performances.

[www.centrepompidou.fr](http://www.centrepompidou.fr) / Telephone: (01) 4478 1233

**Musée d'Orsay:** This is the place to see a vast collection of art from the 19th and early 20th centuries including Art-Nouveau, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist pieces.

[www.musee-orsay.fr](http://www.musee-orsay.fr) / Telephone: (01) 4049 4814

#### **Attractions for kids**

The European outpost of Disneyland is an excellent place to spend the day, with all the usual characters and activities to entertain youngsters. Parc Asterix is a theme park inspired by the comic books and has great rollercoasters, while the huge Ludimax indoor playground is also very popular.

Le Jardin d'Acclimatation amusement park is home to the Exploradome Museum and its fascinating exhibit of optical illusions. France Miniature has over 130 models of famous French attractions that children love to see. And when you've done all that, you can take the kids to play on the beaches of the Seine river, or run rampant in one of the city's many botanical gardens.

#### **Restaurants**

References to Paris and fine dining go hand-in-hand. Famous restaurants and acclaimed chefs abound in the city and expats will have no trouble finding places to eat. With over 5,000 restaurants in Paris, diners can enjoy anything from classic French dishes to international or Nouvelle cuisine. Traditional French bistros, found throughout the city, offer the best value for money.

#### **Annual events**

**Bastille Day:** Commemorating the French Revolution, Bastille Day is celebrated on the 14 July each year with ceremonies, dancing, parties and balls at venues throughout the city.

**Tour de France:** In July each year, the eagerly anticipated and much-publicised Tour de France cycle race rides into town and reaches its exhilarating climax at the famous Champs-Élysées. Date: Throughout the month of July [www.letour.fr](http://www.letour.fr)

**World Circus Festival of Tomorrow:** Some of the world's best circus performers gather at the World Circus Festival of Tomorrow, held in January each year. [www.cirquededemain-paris.com](http://www.cirquededemain-paris.com)

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## Education and schools

Paris has some of the best educational facilities in the world with hundreds of schools and 17 university campuses. Expats placing their children in Paris schools will find a high-quality and demanding level of education. Schooling in France is generally cheap or free, as even private schools and universities are often subsidised. However, non-residents will have to pay fees as the schools are paid for from taxes.

Schooling in France officially starts at age six, but many parents sent their children to school much earlier at age three or even two. The collèges cater for 11-15 year olds, while the lycées are for ages 15-18. The baccalauréat, or le bac, is the finishing diploma for French schooling and performance in this exam is what gives access to higher education.

There is a different schooling culture in France with academic excellence being highly stressed. Teachers consider school their domain and largely expect parents to stay away. A parent would do well to discuss these differences with their child before they enter into the school system.

### Grandes écoles and universities

The French system divides further education into universities and the prestigious grandes ecoles. The Ecole Polytechnique in the Latin Quarter, and the Hautes Etudes Commerciales (HEC) of Paris are rated as, the 10th and 5th best in the world respectively. Unlike most other countries the universities in France are specialised. For instance, the Ecole Polytechnique is an engineering school while the HEC Paris is a business school. The University of Paris is one of the world leaders in the humanities.

Public institutions like the Polytechnique have set fees and receive subsidies from the government so costs are kept low. €200 per year would cover university for residents and citizens. For a private institution like HEC Paris, €16 000 per year is more likely. The school year starts in September and ends in July.

### Private schools

Private schools provide education in French and in English. Some of them have contracts with the government. Often Roman Catholic government-contracted schools can cost as little as €300 per year, while the independent ones can cost more than €2,000.

### Links

- Guide to education: [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secondary\\_education\\_in\\_France](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secondary_education_in_France)
- Ecole Polytechnique: [www.polytechnique.fr](http://www.polytechnique.fr)
- American Private School: [www.asparis.org](http://www.asparis.org)
- Expat Forum: [www.justlanded.com/english/France](http://www.justlanded.com/english/France)
- English schooling: [www.eabjm.org](http://www.eabjm.org)
- University of Paris: [www.paris-sorbonne.fr/en](http://www.paris-sorbonne.fr/en)

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- Update personal details
- Track the progress of your claims\*
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- Talk to a customer consultant via our free webchat service

*\*MembersWorld may not track claims in the USA as we use our partner here.*

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