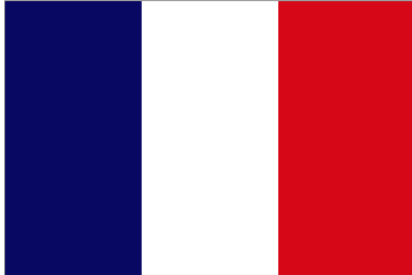




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## FRANCE

### FLAG



### FACTS AND STATISTICS

- Location: Western Europe, bordering Andorra 56.6 km, Belgium 620 km, Germany 451 km, Italy 488 km, Luxembourg 73 km, Monaco 4.4 km, Spain 623 km, Switzerland 573 km
- Capital: Paris

- Climate: generally cool winters and mild summers, but mild winters and hot summers along the Mediterranean; occasional strong, cold, dry, north-to-northwesterly wind known as mistral
- Population: 65+ million (2019 est.)
- Ethnic Make-up: Celtic and Latin with Teutonic, Slavic, North African, Indochinese, Basque minorities
- Religions: Roman Catholic 83%-88%, Protestant 2%, Jewish 1%, Muslim 5%-10%, unaffiliated 4%
- Government: republic
- Business Culture: Ranked 5th in The Business Culture Complexity Index™



**LANGUAGES IN FRANCE**

French, the official language, is the first language of 88% of the population.

Most of those who speak minority languages also speak French, as the minority languages are given no legal recognition. 3% of the population speak German dialects, predominantly in the eastern provinces of Alsace-Lorraine and Moselle.

Flemish is spoken by around 90,000 people in the northeast, which is 0.2% of the French population. Around 1m people near the Italian border, roughly 1.7%

of the population, speaks Italian. Basque is spoken by 0.1% and mainly along the French-Spanish border.

Catalan dialects are spoken in the French Pyrenees by around 260,000 people or 0.4% of the French population.

The Celtic language, Breton, is spoken by 1.2% and mainly in the north west of France. These three languages have no official status within France.

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In the South of France, over 7m speak Occitan dialects, representing 12% of the population of France, but these dialects have no official status. Nor too does Corsu, the dialect of the island of Corsica that is closely related to Tuscan and is spoken by 0.3%.

Arabic, the third largest minority language, is spoken by around 1.7% of the population throughout the country. Other immigrant languages from the former French colonies include Kabyle and Antillean Creole.

## **FRENCH SOCIETY & CULTURE**

### **Cuisine**

- Food is one of the great passions of the French people.
- French cooking is highly refined and involves careful preparation, attention to detail, and the use of fresh ingredients.
- It varies by region and is heavily influenced by what is grown locally.

### **French Family Values**

- The family is the social adhesive of the country and each member has certain duties and responsibilities.
- The extended family provides both emotional and financial support.
- Despite their reputation as romantics, the French have a practical approach towards marriage.
- Families have few children, but parents take their role as guardians and providers very seriously.

### **Relationships - Public vs. Private**

- The French are private people and have different rules of behaviour for people within their social circle and those who are not.
- Although the French are generally polite in all dealings, it is only with their close friends and family that they are free to be themselves.
- Friendship brings with it a set of roles and responsibilities, including being available should you be needed. Friendship involves frequent, if not daily, contact.

## **ETIQUETTE & CUSTOMS IN FRANCE**

### **Meeting Etiquette**

- The handshake is a common form of greeting.

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- Friends may greet each other by lightly kissing on the cheeks, once on the left cheek and once on the right cheek.
  - First names are reserved for family and close friends. Wait until invited before using someone's first name.
  - You are expected to say 'bonjour' or 'bonsoir' (good morning and good evening) with the honorific title Monsieur or Madame when entering a shop and 'au revoir' (good-bye) when leaving.
  - If you live in an apartment building, it is polite to greet your neighbours with the same appellation.

### **Gift Giving Etiquette**

- Flowers should be given in odd numbers but not 13, which is considered unlucky.
- Some older French retain old-style prohibitions against receiving certain flowers: White lilies or chrysanthemums as they are used at funerals; red carnations as they symbolize bad will; any white flowers as they are used at weddings.
- Prohibitions about flowers are not generally followed by the young. When in doubt, it is always best to err on the side of conservatism.
- If you give wine, make sure it is of the highest quality you can afford. The French appreciate their wines.
- Gifts are usually opened when received.

### **Dining Etiquette**

If you are invited to a French house for dinner:

- Arrive on time. Under no circumstances should you arrive more than 10 minutes later than invited without telephoning to explain you have been detained.
- The further south you go in the country, the more flexible time is.
- If invited to a large dinner party, especially in Paris, send flowers the morning of the occasion so that they may be displayed that evening.
- Dress well. The French are fashion conscious and their version of casual is not as relaxed as in many western countries.
- The French do not have a good reputation for customer service. It is cultural. Being rude is part of the culture.

### Table manners

- Table manners are Continental -- the fork is held in the left hand and the knife in the right while eating.
- If there is a seating plan, you may be directed to a particular seat.
- Do not begin eating until the hostess says 'bon appetit'.
- If you have not finished eating, cross your knife and fork on your plate with the fork over the knife.
- Do not rest your elbows on the table, although your hands should be visible and not in your lap.
- Finish everything on your plate.
- Do not cut salad with a knife and fork. Fold the lettuce on to your fork.
- Peel and slice fruit before eating it.
- Leave your wine glass nearly full if you do not want more.