

Directory

CONTENTS

Accommodation	940
Activities	943
Business Hours	945
Children	945
Climate	946
Courses	947
Customs	947
Dangers & Annoyances	947
Discount Cards	948
Embassies & Consulates	949
Festivals & Events	950
Food	951
Gay & Lesbian Travellers	951
Holidays	951
Insurance	952
Internet Access	952
Laundry	952
Legal Matters	952
Local Government	953
Maps	953
Money	955
Post	955
Shopping	956
Solo Travellers	956
Telephone	956
Time	957
Tourist Information	957
Travellers With Disabilities	958
Visas	958
Volunteering	959
Women Travellers	959
Work	960

ACCOMMODATION

Be it a fairy-tale château, an urban boutique hideaway or a mountain refuge, France has accommodation to suit every taste and pocket.

In this guide, accommodation options listed as 'budget' have doubles with private bathroom costing up to €60 (€70 in Paris); 'midrange' hotels charge €61 to €140 (to €160 in Paris); and top-end rooms cost anything upwards of €141 (€161 in Paris). Some hotels offer rooms with a *lavabo* (washbasin), ie with a hall shower (free unless otherwise noted) and/or a hall toilet.

During periods of heavy tourism, popular destinations are packed out and prices soar. Ski

resorts charge their highest rates over Christmas and New Year and the February–March school holidays, while beach resorts are priciest in summer, especially July and August, and particularly from 14 July to 15 August. On the other hand, hotels in inland cities charge low-season rates while everyone is on the coast. In cities whose hotels get mainly business clients, rooms are most expensive from Monday to Thursday and cheaper over the weekend. Rates listed in this guide are generally high-season rates.

Some tourist offices make room reservations, often for a fee of €5, but many only do so if you stop by in person. In the Alps, tourist offices for ski resorts run a central reservation service for booking accommodation.

B&Bs

Some of France's most charming accommodation comes in the form of *chambres d'hôtes* (B&Bs) – up to five bed-and-breakfast rooms attached to a private home. Many hosts cook up a homemade evening meal (*table d'hôte*) for an extra charge (usually €20 to €25). Tourist offices have lists of local *chambres d'hôtes* – urban rarities but plentiful in rural areas.

Gîtes de France acts as an umbrella organisation for B&B properties. Ask at local tourist offices about Gîtes de France brochures and offices, or contact the **Fédération Nationale des Gîtes de France** (Map pp120-1; ☎ 01 49 70 75 75; www.gites-de-france.fr; 59 rue St-Lazare, 9e, Paris; 📍 Trinité). Check out their annual catalogue *Gîtes de Charme* (€20) (online at www.gites-de-france-charme.com).

Bienvenue à la Ferme (Map pp118-19; ☎ 01 53 57 11 44; www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com; 9 av George V, 8e, Paris; 📍 Alma-Marceau, George V) has *chambres d'hôte* on farms. Search online or order a catalogue.

Other useful websites: **Fleurs de Soleil** (http://fleursdesoleil.fr, in French), **Samedi Midi Éditions** (www.samedimidi.com) and **...en France** (www.bbfrance.com).

BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out lonelyplanet.com/hotels. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

PRACTICALITIES

- France uses the metric system for weights and measures.
- Plugs have two round pins, so visitors from the English-speaking lands will need an adaptor; the electric current is 220V at 50Hz AC (you may need a transformer for 110V electrical appliances).
- Videos in France work on the PAL system; TV is Secam.
- Locals read their news in centre-left, highly intellectual *Le Monde* (www.lemonde.fr), right-leaning *Le Figaro* (www.lefigaro.fr) or left-leaning *Libération* (www.liberation.fr).
- For radio news, tune in to the French-language Radio France Info (105.5MHz or thereabouts in most areas), the multilanguage RFI (738kHz or 89MHz in Paris) or, in northwestern France, the BBC World Service (648kHz) and BBC Radio 4 (198kHz).
- In many areas, Autoroute Info (107.7MHz) has round-the-clock information on autoroute travel conditions.
- Popular national FM music stations include NRJ (pronounced 'energy'; www.nrj.fr, in French), Skyrock (www.skyrock.fm, in French) and Nostalgie (www.nostalgie.fr, in French).
- Pick up the free *FUSAC* (France USA Contacts; www.fusac.fr) in Anglophone haunts in Paris for classified ads about housing, babysitting, jobs and language exchanges.

Camping

France has thousands of campsites, most near rivers, lakes or the sea. Most are open from March or April to October. A few hostels let travellers pitch tents in their grounds.

In this book, 'camping' refers to fixed-price deals for two or three people including a tent and a car. Otherwise the price is broken down per person/tent/car. Camping-ground offices are often closed for most of the day. Getting to/from many sites without your own transport can be slow and costly.

Camping in nondesignated spots (*camping sauvage*) is illegal in France. Except in Corsica, you probably won't have problems if you're at least 1500m from a camping area (or, in national parks, at least an hour's walk from the road). Camping on the beach is not a good idea in areas with high tidal variations. Always ask permission before camping on private land.

Gîtes de France and Bienvenue à la Ferme (opposite and opposite) coordinate camping on farms.

In recent years, creative camping options for couples and families – some *écoco-chic* (eco-chic), others adventurous – have sprung up. A *cabane dans les arbres* (also known as a *cabane perchée*) is a sort of Robinson Crusoe-style tree house built high off the ground in a lime, oak or sequoia tree. If you prefer keeping your feet on the ground, you might keep your eyes open for a place that rents a *tipi* (teepee), or lets you snooze in a giant hammock.

Homestays

Under an arrangement known as *hôtes payants* or *hébergement chez l'habitant*, students, young people and tourists stay with French families. In general you rent a room and have access to the bathroom and the kitchen (sometimes limited); meals may also be available. If you're sensitive to smoke or pets make sure you mention this. Language schools often arrange this type of accommodation for their students, as do the following organisations:

Accueil Familial des Jeunes Étrangers (Map pp124-5; ☎ 01 42 22 50 34; www.afe-paris.org; 23 rue du Cherche Midi, 6e, Paris; (M) Sèvres Babylone) Homestays in or near Paris from €555 a month with breakfast.

France Lodge (Map pp118-19; ☎ 01 56 33 85 85; www.apartments-in-paris.com; 2 rue Meissonier, 17e, Paris; (M) Wagram) Accommodation in private Parisian homes; €25 to €60 a night for one person, €40 to €75 for two.

Hostels

A dormitory bed in an *auberge de jeunesse* (youth hostel) costs about €25 in Paris, and anything from €10.30 to €28 in the provinces, depending on location, amenities and facilities; sheets are included and breakfast often is, too (or is available for about €3.50). To prevent outbreaks of bed bugs, sleeping bags are no longer permitted. Hostels on the seashore or in the mountains sometimes offer seasonal outdoor activities. All hostels are totally nonsmoking.

Some hostels are little more than a few spartan rooms set aside in a hostel for young workers (*foyer de jeunes travailleurs/travailleuses*). In university towns, *foyers d'étudiant* (student dormitories) are sometimes converted for use by travellers during summer.

Guests need to purchase an annual *Hostelling International* card (€11/16 for under/over 26s) or a nightly *Welcome Stamp* (€1.80 to €2.90, up to a maximum of six) to stay at hostels run by the two French hostelling associations:

Fédération Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse (FUJ); Map pp120-1; ☎ 01 44 89 87 27; www.fuaj.org; 27 rue Pajol, 18e, Paris; (M) Marx Dormoy).

Ligue Française pour les Auberges de la Jeunesse (LFA); Map pp114-15; ☎ 01 44 16 78 78; www.auberges-de-jeunesse.com; 7 rue Vergniaud, 13e, Paris; (M) Glacière)

Hotels

In this book we have tried to feature well-situated, independent (ie nonchain) hotels that offer good value, a warm welcome, at least a bit of charm and a palpable sense of place.

Hotels in France are rated with one to four stars, although the ratings are based on objective criteria (eg the size of the entry hall), not the quality of the service, the decor or cleanliness. Prices often reflect these intangibles far more than they do the number of stars.

French hotels almost never include breakfast in their advertised nightly rates. Unless specified otherwise, prices quoted in this guide don't include breakfast, which costs around €6.50/8/18 in a budget/midrange/top-end hotel. When you book, hotels usually ask for a credit-card number and, occasionally, written (faxed) confirmation; some require a deposit.

A double room generally has one double bed (often two pushed-together singles!); a room with twin beds (*deux lits*) is usually more expensive, as is a room with a bathtub instead of a shower. Triples and quads usually have two or three beds.

The small, often family-run hotels rated by **Logis de France** (☎ 01 45 84 83 84; www.logis-de-france.fr) with one to three chimneys are known for their charm and warm welcome. It publishes an annual guide with maps.

Independent hotels, each with its own unique local character, are grouped by **Arcantis** (www.arcantis-hotels.com), which brings together two- and three-star places; **Best Western** (www.bestwestern.com), whose hotels are generally on the upper end of midrange; **Citôtel** (www.citotel.com); **Contact Hôtel** (www.contact-hotel.com);

SMOKE-FREE HOTEL ROOMS

Almost all French hotels, except a few budget ones, now have at least some nonsmoking rooms. The nonsmoking icon (☒) appears only when an establishment is 100% nonsmoking.

and **Inter-Hotel** (www.inter-hotel.fr). Superluxury establishments can be found through **Relaix & Châteaux** (www.relaischateaux.com) and **Grandes Étapes Françaises** (www.grandesetapes.fr).

More French hotel rooms than ever are controlled by a few huge chains offering predictable, cookie-cutter establishments, often along main access roads, that place predictability and convenience over atmosphere.

From cheapest to poshest, the brands belonging to the **Accor group** (www.accor.com) include **Formule 1** (www.hotelformule1.com), **Etap** (www.etaphotel.com), **Ibis** (www.ibishotel.com), **Mercure** (www.mercure.com), **Novotel** (www.novotel.com) and **Sofitel** (www.sofitel.com).

The **Louvre Hotels group** (www.louvrehotels.com) has four brands (from cheapest to most expensive): **Première Classe** (www.premieredasse.com), **Campanile** (www.campanile.com), **Kyriad** (www.kyriad.com) and **Kyriad Prestige** (www.kyriardprestige.com).

Choice Hotels (www.choicehotels.com) brands in France include **Comfort Inn** (www.comfortinn.com), **Quality Inn** (www.qualityinn.com), **Clarion** (www.clarionhotel.com) and **Sleep Inn** (www.sleepinn.com).

Other inexpensive chain options include **Balladins** (☎ 08 25 08 84 53; www.balladins.com), **B&B Hôtels** (www.hotel-bb.com), **Bonsai Hôtels** (☎ 08 10 63 72 71; www.bonsai-hotels.fr) and **Hôtel Stars** (www.starshotels.com).

Refuges & Gîtes d'Étape

A *refuge* (mountain hut or shelter) is a bog-basic cabin established along trails in uninhabited mountainous areas and operated by national-park authorities, the **Club Alpin Français** (CAF; www.ffcam.fr, in French) or other private organisations. *Refuges* are marked on hiking and climbing maps. A bunk in the dorm generally costs €10 to €20. Hot meals are sometimes available and, in a few cases, mandatory, pushing the price of a bed up to €30 or beyond. Advance reservations and a weather check are essential before setting out.

Gîtes d'étape, better equipped and more comfortable than *refuges* (some even have showers), are situated along walking trails

in less remote areas, often villages. Gîtes de France (p940) publishes an annual guide, *Gîtes d'Étapes et de Séjour* (€10).

Rental Accommodation

Renting a furnished studio, apartment or villa can be an economical alternative for stays of a few days or more, plus it gives you the chance to live a little bit like a local, with trips to the farmers market and the *boulangerie*. Cleaning, linen rental and electricity fees usually cost extra.

In rural areas, Gîtes de France (p940) handles some of the most charming *gîtes ruraux* (self-contained holiday cottages).

Finding an apartment for long-term rental can be gruelling. Landlords, many of whom prefer locals to foreigners, usually require substantial proof of financial responsibility and sufficient funds in France; many ask for a *caution* (guarantee) and a hefty deposit.

Classified ads appear in **De Particulier à Particulier** (www.pap.fr), published Thursday and sold at newsstands. **FUSAC** (p941) also has short- and long-term apartment ads.

For apartments outside Paris it's best to be on-site. Check places like bars and *tabacs* (tobacconists) for free local newspapers (often named after the number of the *département*) with classified listings.

ACTIVITIES

From the peaks, rivers and canyons of the Alps to the mountains and volcanic peaks of the Massif Central – not to mention 3200km of coastline stretching from Italy to Spain and from the Basque country to the Straits of Dover – France offers a cornucopia of exhilarating outdoor adventures.

See this book's destination listings for details and check with local and regional tourist offices (or consult their websites) for information on local activities, clubs and companies.

Some youth hostels (p941) offer week-long sports *stages* (courses).

Adventure Sports

Be it canyoning, diving, ice-driving or kite-surfing (on snow or water!), France sets the pulse racing. In larger cities and picturesque regions like the Côte d'Azur and the Alps, local companies offer all kinds of high-adrenaline pursuits; see regional chapters for details.

Adventures in *alpinisme* (mountaineering), *escalade* (rock climbing), *escalade de glace* (ice climbing) and other highland activities with

a professional guide can be arranged through the **Club Alpin Français** (www.ffcam.fr, in French).

Deltaplane (hang-gliding) and *parapente* (paragliding) are all the rage in the Pyrenees, Brittany, Massif Central and Languedoc-Roussillon regions; see those chapters for details. The Nice-based **Fédération Française de Vol Libre** (☎ 04 97 03 82 82; <http://federation.ffvl.fr>, in French) groups regional clubs specialising in these pursuits as well as *le kite-surf* (kitesurfing), popular at spots all along France's Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts.

Vol à voile (gliding) is popular in southern France, where temperatures are warmer and thermals better. The Causse Méjean (p789) in Languedoc is a popular spot. The **Fédération Française de Vol à Voile** (FFVV; ☎ 01 45 44 04 78; www.ffv.org, in French; 29 rue de Sèvres, 6e, Paris) provides details of gliding clubs countrywide.

Speleology was pioneered in France and there are still some great spots for cave exploration; the **CAF** (www.ffcam.fr, in French) has information.

Cycling

The French take cycling very seriously. Whole parts of the country – except, it's rumoured, for some pharmacies – grind to a halt during the famous annual Tour de France (p54).

A *vélo tout-terrain* (VTT, or mountain bike) is a fantastic tool for exploring the countryside. Some GR (*grandes randonnées*) and GRP (*grandes randonnées de pays*) trails (see p944) are open to mountain bikers. A *piste cyclable* or a *voie cyclable* is a cycling path or lane.

Some of the best areas for mountain biking (with varying gradients and grades of difficulty) are around Annecy and Chambéry in the Alps and throughout the Pyrenees. In southwestern France, the Dordogne and Quercy offer a vast network of scenic, tranquil roads for pedal-powered tourists. The Loire Valley, Alsace, Burgundy, the Lubéron in Provence and coastal regions like Brittany, Normandy and the Atlantic coast offer a wealth of easier (flatter) options.

For details on companies that offer cycling tours of France, see p975.

For maps, see p953. Lonely Planet's *Cycling France* includes essential maps, advice, directions and technical tips. For information on transporting your bicycle by train and bike rental, see p969. Details on places that rent out bikes – though not always helmets – appear in each city or town listing under Getting Around.

The **Fête du Vélo** (www.feteduvelo.fr, in French), a national cycling festival, takes place all over the country on the first weekend in June.

Cycling organisations:

Association Française de Développement des Véloroutes et Voies Vertes (www.af3v.org) Has a database of 250 signposted *véloroutes* (bike paths) and *voies vertes* (greenways) for cycling and in-line skating.

Cartovélo (www.cartovelo.fr) Sells cycling guides.

Fédération Française de Cyclisme (www.ffc.fr, in French) Founded 1881, the French Cycling Federation organises competitive cycling in France, including (as of 2008) the Tour de France.

Fédération Française de Cyclotourisme (www.ffct.org, in French) Founded in 1923, this organisation promotes bicycle touring and mountain biking.

Union Touristique Les Amis de la Nature (<http://trois.v.amis-nature.org>, in French) Has details on local, regional and long-distance *véloroutes* (cycling routes) around France.

In-Line Skating

Over 10,000 in-line skaters – accompanied by skating police – race through the streets of Paris from 10pm to 1am every Friday night. The free, 30km ride, whose purpose – in addition to fun – is to promote in-line skating as a mode of urban transport, is the largest such event in the world. For details see the website of **Pari Roller** (www.pari-roller.com).

The **Fédération Française de Roller Skating** (<http://parcours.ffr.asso.fr>, in French) can provide details on routes suitable for in-line skating.

Skiing & Snowboarding

France sports more than 400 ski resorts in the Alps, the Jura, the Pyrenees, the Vosges and Massif Central – and even the mountains of Corsica. The season generally lasts from mid-December to late March or April. January and February tend to have the best overall conditions but the slopes get very crowded during the February–March school holidays.

The high Alps have some of the world's priciest and most fashionable resorts (see p524 for the full scoop on winter and summer Alpine skiing), although smaller, low-altitude stations in the Alps, the Pyrenees and the Massif Central are cheaper. Cross-country skiing is possible at Alpine resorts but best done in the valleys; the Jura (p570) has some lovely trails. Some lower-altitude stations are examining their options should global warming make the ski season too short and/or unpredictable.

One of the cheapest ways to ski or snowboard is with a package deal, though thanks to budget airlines flying to/from Lyon, Grenoble,

SKIING SUPERLATIVES

France can claim a fair few superlatives in the world of skiing:

- The world's largest ski area is Les Portes du Soleil (p539), northwest of Chamonix.
- Europe's highest station is Val Thorens (2300m; p551), west of Méribel.
- Europe's largest skiable glacier, which has 120 hectares of marked slopes, is at Les Deux Alpes (p565), in the spectacular Parc National des Ecrins.
- One of France's longest off-piste trails (20km) is the legendary Vallée Blanche (p532) at Chamonix; the longest official (groomed) one – some 16km – is black-marked La Sarenne (p566) at Alpe d'Huez.

Chambéry and Geneva (Switzerland), arranging Alpine breaks independently is equally viable.

Paris-based **Ski France** (www.skifrance.fr) has information and an annual brochure covering more than 90 ski resorts. **CAF** (www.ffcam.fr, in French) can also provide information on mountain activities.

Walking

The French countryside is criss-crossed by a staggering 120,000km of *sentiers balisés* (marked walking paths), which pass through every imaginable terrain in every region of the country. No permit is needed to hike. For details on *topoguides* (walking guides), see p953.

Probably the best-known trails are the *sentiers de grande randonnée* (GR), long-distance paths marked by red-and-white-striped track indicators. Some – like the GR5, which goes from the Netherlands through the French Alps to Nice – are hundreds of kilometres long.

The *grandes randonnées de pays* (GRP) trails, whose markings are yellow, are designed for intense exploration of one particular area. Other types of trails include *sentiers de promenade randonnée* (PR), walking paths marked in yellow; *drailles*, paths used by cattle to get to high-altitude summer pastures; and *chemins de halage*, canal towpaths. Shorter day-hike trails are often known as *sentiers de petites randonnées* or *sentiers de pays*.

The **Fédération Française de la Randonnée Pédestre** (FFRP; French Ramblers' Association; www.ffrp.asso.fr, in French) has an **information centre** (Map

pp114-15; ☎ 01 44 89 93 93; 64 rue du Dessous des Berges, 13e, Paris; 📖 Bibliothèque François Mitterrand in Paris. Another good resource is the **Club Alpin Français** (www.ffcam.fr, in French), which groups 240 local mountain sports clubs.

Lonely Planet's *Walking in France* is full of lively detail and essential information. For information on *refuges* and other overnight accommodation for walkers, such as *gîtes d'étape*, see p942. For information on maps, see p953.

Water Sports

France has fine beaches along all its coasts – the English Channel, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. The beautifully sandy beaches stretching along the family-oriented Atlantic Coast (eg near La Rochelle) are less crowded than their rather pebbly counterparts on the Côte d'Azur. Corsica has some truly magnificent spots. Brittany, Normandy and the Channel coast are also popular, albeit cooler, beach destinations. The general public is free to use any beach not marked as private.

The best surfing is on the Atlantic Coast around Biarritz (p685), where waves reach heights of 4m. Windsurfing is popular wherever there's water and a breeze, and equipment is often rented out near beaches and lakes.

White-water rafting, canoeing and kayaking are practised on many French rivers, especially in the Massif Central and the Alps, but also in Burgundy's Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan and along the Gorges de l'Allier, Gorges de l'Ardèche, Gorges du Tarn and Gorges du Verdon.

For kitesurfing see p943.

All French cities and towns have public swimming pools. Some may require that swimming suits be made of Lycra.

BUSINESS HOURS

French business hours are regulated by a maze of government regulations, including the 35-hour working week. Shop hours are usually 9am or 9.30am to 7pm or 8pm, often with a break from noon or 1pm to 2pm or 3pm. The midday break is uncommon in Paris but, in general, gets longer the further south you go. French law requires that most businesses close on Sunday; exceptions include grocery stores, *boulangeries*, cake shops, florists and businesses catering exclusively to the tourist trade. In some places shops close on Monday.

Restaurants generally serve lunch from noon or 12.30pm to 2pm or 2.30pm and dinner from

7pm or 7.30pm until 9.30pm or 10pm; they are often closed one or two days of the week, chosen according to the owner's whim. Cafés are usually open all day long, from early morning until around midnight. Many bars open in the early evening and close at 1am or 2am.

Most (but not all) national museums are closed on Tuesday, while most local museums are closed on Monday, though in summer some open daily. Many museums close at lunchtime.

Banks are usually open from 8am or 9am to some time between 11.30am or 1pm and then from 1.30pm or 2pm to 4.30pm or 5pm, Monday to Friday or Tuesday to Saturday. Exchange services may end half an hour before closing time.

Post offices generally open from 8.30am or 9am to 5pm or 6pm on weekdays (7pm in Paris), perhaps with a midday break, and on Saturday from 8am to noon.

Supermarkets usually open Monday to Saturday from about 9am to 7pm or 8pm, with a midday break in some smaller towns; some open on Sunday morning. Small food shops (except for *boulangeries*) often shut on Monday also, so Saturday may be your last chance to stock up on provisions until Tuesday. Most open-air markets start at between 6am to 8am and finish at 12.30pm or 1pm. Many service stations have groceries open 24 hours a day.

CHILDREN

Rural France can be a great place for travel with children and, while big cities can present a variety of difficulties, lots of activities are on offer for *les enfants*, especially in Paris.

Practicalities

France is reasonably child-friendly, although French parents don't usually take their children to a restaurant any more sophisticated than a corner café. Chain restaurants like Hippopotamus and Bistro Romain are casual and serve food that most kids like, and many nicer restaurants have a reasonably priced children's menu. Take drinks and snacks with you on sightseeing days if you want to avoid costly stops in cafés. Picnics are a great way to feed the troops and enjoy local produce.

In Paris, weekly magazine *L'Officiel des Spectacles* (p190) advertises babysitting services (*gardes d'enfants, baby-sitting*). Elsewhere, tourist offices often have lists of babysitters, or try www.bebe-annonce.com (in French).

RAIN, HAIL, SNOW OR SHINE

Check out the French weather forecasts at www.meteofrance.com (in French) or call one of the following for €0.34 per minute:

National, city, marine and mountain forecasts

☎ 3250 Local & département forecasts

☎ 08 92 68 02 + two-digit département number

Car-rental firms have children's safety seats for hire at a nominal cost; book them in advance. High chairs and cots (cribs) are standard in midrange restaurants and hotels. The choice of baby food, infant formula, soy and cow's milk, nappies (diapers) and the like in French supermarkets is similar to that in any developed country, but remember that opening hours may be more limited – run out of nappies on Saturday evening and you could be facing a long and messy weekend. (Should disaster strike, pharmacies – of which there is always one open for at least a few hours on a Sunday – also sell baby paraphernalia, and in Paris a number of pharmacies are open 24/7.)

Staying in a *chambre d'hôte* (B&B; p940) that also does a *table d'hôte* is fab for families; little kids can sweetly slumber upstairs while weary parents wine and dine in peace downstairs (don't forget your baby monitor!) Fancier camping grounds have pools and facilities for kids.

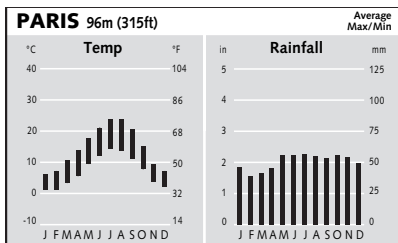
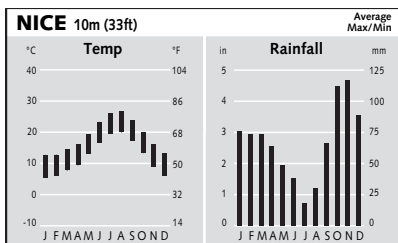
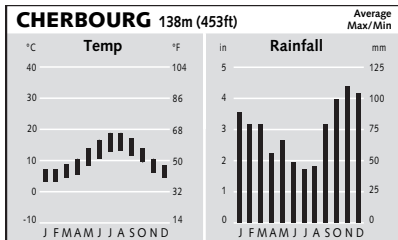
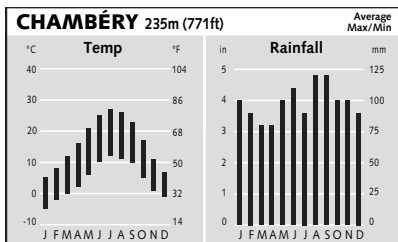
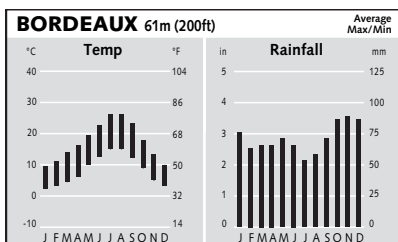
Sights & Activities

Include the kids in the trip planning: Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* is a useful info source.

Paris' narrow streets and metro stairways can be a trial, but the capital has wonderful parks with amusements and activities like pony rides and puppet shows. For more information about Paris for children, see p162. Beaches are great kid-pleasers, the Atlantic coast being especially popular with families (note: some beaches have strong undertows). The French Alps also have lots of outdoor activities year-round, like horse riding, snowshoeing, light hiking and biking (most bike rental places carry children's bicycles).

CLIMATE CHARTS

France has a temperate climate with generally mild winters, except in mountainous areas and the far northeast (Lorraine and Alsace). For climatic considerations, see p18.



COURSES

Art, cooking, wine, language, film – the best of France is there for the learning. The website www.studyabroadlinks.com can help you find specific courses and summer programs, while www.edufrance.fr/en has information about university study.

Cooking

For short cooking courses and specialised sessions such as pastry making, see p86.

Language

All manner of French language courses are available in Paris and provincial towns and cities; many also arrange accommodation. Prices and courses vary greatly and the content can often be tailored to your specific needs (for a fee). The government site www.diplomatique.gouv.fr (under 'Francophony') and www.europa-pages.com/france list language schools in France. Some schools you might consider:

Alliance Française (Map pp124-5; ☎ 01 42 84 90 00; www.alliancefr.org; 101 bd Raspail, 6e, Paris; 📍 St-Placide) Venerable institution for the worldwide promotion of French language and civilisation, with intensive and extensive classes, including literature and business French.

Centre de Linguistique Appliquée de Besançon (☎ 03 81 66 52 00; <http://cla.univ-fcomte.fr>; 6 rue Gabriel Plançon, Besançon) One of France's largest language schools, in a beautiful city, with a variety of language and culture classes.

Centre Méditerranéen d'Études Françaises (☎ 04 93 78 21 59; www.monte-carlo.mc/centremed; chemin des Oliviers, Cap d'Ail) Côte d'Azur school dating to 1952, with an open-air amphitheatre designed by Jean Cocteau overlooking the sparkling blue Med.

Eurocentre d'Amboise (☎ 02 47 23 10 60; www.eurocentres.com; 9 mail St-Thomas, Amboise) Small, well-organised school in the charming Loire Valley. Eurocentre has branches in La Rochelle and Paris.

Université de Provence (☎ 04 42 95 32 17; <http://sites.univ-provence.fr/wscefee>; 29 av Robert Schumann, Aix-en-Provence) A hot choice in lovely Aix: semester-long language courses as well as shorter summer classes.

CUSTOMS

Goods brought in and out of countries within the EU incur no additional taxes provided duty has been paid somewhere within the EU and the goods are for personal consumption. Duty-free shopping is available only if you're leaving the EU.

Coming from non-EU countries (including the Channel Islands), duty-free allowances (for adults) are: 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars, 1L of spirits, 2L of wine, 50ml of perfume, 250ml *eau de toilette* and other goods up to the value of €175 (€90 for under 15s). Higher limits apply if you're coming from Andorra. Anything over these limits must be declared. For details, see www.douane.gouv.fr (partly in English).

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

France is generally a safe place in which to live and travel but crime has risen dramatically in the last few years. Although property crime is a major problem, it's extremely unlikely that you will be physically assaulted while walking down the street. Always check your government's travel advisory warnings. Safety advice for women travellers is on p959.

Hunters

The hunting season runs from September to February. If you see signs reading '*chasseurs*' or '*chasse gardée*' strung up or tacked to trees, think twice about wandering into the area. As well as millions of wild animals, 25 French hunters die each year after being shot by other hunters.

Hunting is traditional and commonplace in all rural areas in France, especially the Vosges, the Sologne, the southwest and the Baie de Somme.

Natural Dangers

There are powerful tides and strong undertows at many places along the Atlantic Coast, from the Spanish border north to Brittany and Normandy.

Only swim in *zones de baignade surveillée* (beaches monitored by life guards). Be aware of tide times and, if sleeping on a beach, always make sure you are above the high-tide mark.

Thunderstorms in the mountains and the hot southern plains can be extremely sudden and violent. Check the weather report before setting out on a long walk and be prepared for sudden storms and temperature drops if you're heading into the high country of the Alps or Pyrenees.

Avalanches pose an enormous danger in the French Alps (see p525).

Smoking

As of 2007, smoking is illegal in all public spaces, including restaurants and pubs – and, to the surprise of some, the law is actually obeyed!

Strikes

France is the only European country in which public workers enjoy an unlimited right to strike, and they avail themselves of it with carefree abandon. Aggrieved truck drivers often block motorways and farmers agitating for more government support sometimes dump tonnes of produce on major arteries.

Getting caught in one of the 'social dialogues' that characterise labour relations in France can put a serious crimp in your travel plans. It's best to leave some wriggle room in your schedule, particularly around the departure times.

Riots

Attacks on the police and public buildings, such as those that swept French cities and their poor suburbs in November 2005 (p56), are very much the exception.

Theft

The security problem you're most likely to encounter is theft, including pick-pocketing and bag snatching (eg in dense crowds and public places). A common ploy is for one person to distract you while another steals your wallet, camera or bag. Tired tourists on the train from the airport are a frequent target for thieves. Big cities – notably Paris, Marseille and Nice – have the highest crime levels. Particularly in Paris, museums are beset by organised gangs of seemingly innocuous children who are actually trained pickpockets.

There's no need whatsoever to travel in fear. Taking a few simple precautions will minimise your chances of being ripped off.

- A hidden money belt is the safest way to carry money, credit cards and important documents.
- Take only what you need on busy sight-seeing days; use the hotel/hostel safe for the rest.
- On trains, keep bags as close to you as possible: the luggage racks (if in use) at the ends of the carriage are an easy target for thieves; in sleeping compartments, lock the door carefully at night.

- Be especially vigilant for bag-snatchers at train stations, airports, fast-food outlets, cinemas, outdoor cafés and beaches and on public transport.
- Photocopy your passport, credit cards, plane tickets, driver's licence and other important documents – leave one copy at home and keep another one with you, separate from the originals.

TRAVELLING BY CAR

Break-ins to parked cars are a widespread problem. Gangs cruise seemingly tranquil tourist areas for unattended vehicles – out-of-town or foreign plates and rental stickers are a dead giveaway. *Never, ever* leave anything valuable – or anything not valuable – inside your car. Hiding your bags in the trunk is risky; in hatchbacks it's practically an open invitation to theft.

Aggressive theft from cars stopped at red lights, eg by motorcycle-borne thieves, is occasionally a problem, especially in the south (specifically in and around Marseille and sometimes Nice). As a precaution, lock your car doors and roll up the windows.

DISCOUNT CARDS

Camping Card International

The Camping Card International (www.campingcardinternational.com) is a form of ID that can be used instead of a passport when checking into a camping ground and includes third-party liability insurance. As a result, many camping grounds offer a 5% to 20% discount if you sign in with one. CCIs are issued by automobile associations, camping federations and, sometimes, on the spot at camping grounds.

Seniors Cards

People over 60 or 65 are entitled to discounts on things like public transport, museum admission fees and theatres. For details on the SNCF's Carte Sénior, see p976.

Student, Youth & Teachers' Cards

These cards, available from student unions and travel agencies, often yield fantastic discounts. An **International Student Identity Card** (ISIC; €12) can easily pay for itself through half-price admissions and cheap meals in student cafeterias. Many places stipulate a maximum age, usually 24 or 25 (ie 'under 25' or 'under 26'). For more details, check the website of

the **International Student Travel Confederation** (ISTC; www.istc.org or www.isic.fr, in French).

If you're under 26 but not a student, you can apply for an **International Youth Travel Card** (IYTC or Go25, €12), also issued by ISTC, which entitles you to many of the same discounts as an ISIC. The **European Youth Card** (Euro<26 card) offers similar discounts across 41 European countries to anyone under 26; see www.euro26.org.

Teachers, professional artists, museum conservators and certain categories of students are admitted to some museums free. Bring along proof of affiliation – for example, an **International Teacher Identity Card** (ITIC).

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

French Embassies & Consulates

France's diplomatic and consular representatives abroad are listed on the website www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en.

Australia Canberra (☎ 02-6216 0100; www.ambafrance-au.org; 6 Perth Ave, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney Consulate (☎ 02-9268 2400; Level 26, St Martin's Tower, 31 Market St, Sydney, NSW 2000) There are also seven consular agencies.

Belgium Brussels (☎ 02 548 8711; www.ambafrance-be.org; 65 rue Ducale, Brussels 1000); Brussels Consulate (☎ 02-548 8811; www.consulfrance-bruxelles.org; 42 bd du Régent, Brussels 1000)

Canada Ottawa (☎ 613-789-1795; www.ambafrance-ca.org; 42 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1M 2C9); Toronto Consulate (☎ 416-847-1900; www.consulfrance-toronto.org; 2 Bloor St East, Ste 2200, Toronto M4W 1A8)

Germany Berlin (☎ 030-590 039 000; www.botschaft-frankreich.de; Pariser Platz 5, Berlin 10117, public entry at Wilhelmstrasse 69); Munich Consulate (☎ 089-419 4110; 3rd fl, Heimeranstrasse 31, Munich 80339)

Ireland Dublin (☎ 01-277 5000; www.ambafrance-ie.org; 36 Ailesbury Rd, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4)

Italy Rome (☎ 06 68 60 11; www.ambafrance-it.org; Piazza Farnese 67, 00186 Rome)

Netherlands The Hague (☎ 070-312 58 00; www.ambafrance-nl.org; Smidsplein 1, 2514 BT Den Haag); Amsterdam Consulate (☎ 020-530 6969; www.consulfrance-amsterdam.org; Vijzelgracht 2, 1017 HR Amsterdam)

New Zealand Wellington (☎ 04-384 2555; www.ambafrance-nz.org; 13th fl, Rural Bank Bldg, 34-42 Manners St, PO Box 11-343, Wellington)

South Africa Pretoria (☎ 012-425 1600; www.ambafrance-rsa.org; 250 Melk St, New Muckleneuk, 0181 Pretoria)

Spain Madrid (☎ 91 423 89 00; www.ambafrance-es.org; Calle de Salustiano Olozaga 9, 28001 Madrid); Barcelona Consulate (☎ 93 270 30 00; www.consulfrance-barcelone.org; Ronda Universitat 22, 08007 Barcelona)

Switzerland Bern (☎ 031 359 21 11; www.ambafrance-ch.org; Schosshaldenstrasse 46, 3006 Berne)

UK London Embassy (☎ 020-7073 1000; www.ambafrance-uk.org; 58 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7JT); London Consulate (☎ 020-7073 1200; www.consulfrance-londres.org; 21 Cromwell Rd, London SW7 2EN); London Visa Section (☎ 020-7073 1250; 6A Cromwell Pl, London SW7 2EW)

USA Washington (☎ 202-944-6000; www.ambafrance-us.org; 4101 Reservoir Rd NW, Washington, DC 20007); New York Consulate (☎ 212-606-3600; www.consulfrance-newyork.org; 934 Fifth Ave, New York, NY 10021)

Embassies & Consulates in France

All foreign embassies are in Paris. Many countries – including the Canada, Japan, the UK, USA and most European countries – also have consulates in other major cities such as Bordeaux, Lyon, Nice, Marseille and Strasbourg. To find an embassy not listed here, look up '*ambassade*' under Paris in the super user-friendly **Pages Jaunes** (Yellow Pages; www.pagesjaunes.fr).

Australia Paris (Map pp124-5; ☎ 01 40 59 33 00; www.france.embassy.gov.au; 4 rue Jean Rey, 15e; **M** Bir Hakeim)

Belgium Paris (Map pp118-19; ☎ 01 44 09 39 39; www.diplomatie.be/paris; 9 rue de Tilsitt, 17e; **M** Charles de Gaulle-Étoile)

Canada Paris (Map pp118-19; ☎ 01 44 43 29 00; www.amb-canada.fr; 35 av Montaigne, 8e; **M** Franklin D Roosevelt); Nice consulate (☎ 04 93 92 93 22; 10 rue Lamartine)

Germany Paris Embassy & Consulate (Map pp118-19; ☎ 01 53 83 45 00; www.paris.diplo.de, in French & German; 13 av Franklin D Roosevelt, 8e; **M** Franklin D Roosevelt)

Ireland Paris (Map pp118-19; ☎ 01 44 17 67 00; www.embassyofirelandparis.com; 12 av Foch, 16e; **M** Argentine)

Italy Paris Embassy (Map pp124-5; ☎ 01 49 54 03 00; www.amb-italie.fr; 51 rue de Varenne, 7e; **M** Rue du Bac); Paris Consulate (Map pp114-15; ☎ 01 44 30 47 00; 5 bd Émile Augier, 16e; **M** La Muette)

Japan Paris (Map pp118-19; ☎ 01 48 88 62 00; www.amb-japon.fr; 7 av Hoche, 8e; **M** Courcelles)

Netherlands Paris (Map pp124-5; ☎ 01 40 62 33 00; www.amb-pays-bas.fr; 7 rue Eblé, 7e; **M** St-François Xavier)

New Zealand Paris (Map pp118-19; ☎ 01 45 01 43 43; www.nzembassy.com; 7ter rue Léonard de Vinci, 16e; **M** Victor Hugo)

South Africa Paris (Map pp124-5; ☎ 01 53 59 23 23; www.afriquesud.net; 59 quai d'Orsay, 7e; **M** Invalides)

Spain Paris (Map pp118-19; ☎ 01 44 43 18 00; www.amb-espagne.fr; 22 av Marceau, 8e; **M** Alma-Marceau)

Switzerland Paris Embassy (Map pp124-5; ☎ 01 49 55 67 00; www.amb-suisse.fr; 142 rue de Grenelle, 7e; **M** Varenne);

UK Paris Embassy (Map pp118-19; ☎ 01 44 51 31 00;

www.amb-grandebretagne.fr; 35 rue du Faubourg St-Honoré, 8e; (M) Concorde); Paris Consulate (Map pp118-19; ☎ 01 44 51 31 00; 18bis rue d'Anjou, 8e; (M) Madeleine); Marseille Consulate (☎ 04 91 54 92 00; place Varian Fry, 6e)

USA Paris Embassy (Map pp118-19; ☎ 01 43 12 22 22; http://france.usembassy.gov; 2 av Gabriel, 8e; (M) Concorde); US citizen services (☎ 01 43 12 26 71; 4 av Gabriel, 8e; (M) Concorde); ☎ 9am-noon Mon-Fri except US & French holidays); Nice Consular Agency (Map pp862-3; ☎ 04 93 88 89 55; 3rd fl, 7 av Gustave V); Marseille Consulate (☎ 04 91 54 92 00; place Varian Fry, 6e)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Most French cities and towns have at least one major music, dance, theatre, cinema or art festival each year and many have several. Villages hold *foires* (fairs) and *fêtes* (festivals) to honour anything from a local saint to the year's garlic crop. We list many of these important annual events in city and town sections; more details are available from tourist-office websites. During big events towns get extremely busy and accommodation can get booked out in advance.

Tickets for many events can be purchased at tourist offices and *billetteries* (ticket agencies) run by **Fnac** (☎ 08 92 68 36 22 for €0.34 a min; www.fnacspectacles.com, in French) and **Virgin** (☎ 08 25 12 91 39 for €0.15 a min; www.virginmega.fr, in French); both charge a commission of €1 to €6.

FEBRUARY

Carnaval de Nice (p869; www.nicecarnaval.com) Merrymaking in Nice, on the Riviera, during France's largest street carnival (last half of February)

MARCH & APRIL

Feria Pascale (p830; www.feriaarles.com, in French) In the ancient *arène* (arena) of Arles, the Feria kicks off the bullfight season with much cavorting and merriment (Easter).

MAY & JUNE

May Day Across France, workers' day is celebrated with trade-union parades and diverse protests. People give each other *mugnets* (lilies of the valley) for good luck. No one works – except waiters and *mugnet* sellers (1 May).

International Film Festival (p880; www.festival-cannes.com) The stars walk the red carpet at Cannes, the biggest of Europe's see-and-be-seen cinema extravaganzas (mid-May).

Pèlerinage des Gitans (p835; www.gitans.fr, in French) Twice a year *gitans* (Roma Gitanos people) from all over Europe make their way to the Camargue for a flamboyant street fiesta of music, dancing and dipping their toes in the sea (24-25 May and Sunday nearest 22 October).

Fête de la Musique (www.fetedelamusique.culture.fr, in French) Bands, orchestras, crooners, buskers and spectators take to the streets for this nationwide celebration of music (21 June).

Gay Pride (www.gaypride.fr, in French) Sizzling street parades, performances and parties throughout Paris and other major cities (late June in Paris, mid-May to early July in other cities).

JULY

Festival d'Aix-en-Provence (p822; www.festival-aix.com) Attracts some of the world's best classical music, opera, ballet and buskers (late June to mid-July).

Bastille Day Fireworks, balls, processions – including a military parade down Paris' Champs-Élysées – and all-round hoo-ha mark France's National Day, on the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille in 1789 (14 July).

Festival d'Avignon (p840; www.festival-avignon.com) Actors, dancers and musicians flock to Avignon to perform in the official and fringe art festivals (mid-July).

Nice Jazz Festival (p869; www.nicejazzfest.fr) See jazz cats and other pop, rock and world artists take over public spaces and the Roman ruins of Nice (mid-July).

Paris Plages (p164; www.paris.fr, search for 'Paris plages') Tan on a sandy Seine-side beach in the capital (mid-July–mid-August).

Fêtes de Bayonne (p691; www.fetes-de-bayonne.com) Bullfighting, cow-chasing and Basque music are the order of the day at Bayonne's biggest event (late July–early August).

AUGUST & SEPTEMBER

Festival Interceltique de Lorient (p339; www.festival-interceltique.com) Hundreds of thousands of Celts from Brittany and abroad flock to Lorient to celebrate Celtic culture (early August).

Fêtes d'Arvor (p346; www.fetes-arvor.org, in French) A passionate celebration of local Breton culture in Vannes, with street parades, concerts and numerous *festoù-noz* (night festivals; mid-August).

Braderie de Lille (p231) Three days of mussel-munching as this colossal flea market engulfs the city with antiques, handicrafts and bric-a-brac (first weekend in September).

Festival du Cinema Américain (p294; www.festival-deauville.com) The silver screen flickers next to the sea at this celebration of American cinema in Deauville (early September).

Journées du Patrimoine Countrywide festivals that see some of France's most important public buildings open to the public (third weekend in September).

DECEMBER

Christmas Markets in Alsace (p381) Colourful, traditional pre-Christmas markets and celebrations (last weekend in November through Christmas or New Year).

Fête des Lumières (p506; www.lumieres.lyon.fr) France's biggest and best light show transforms Lyon (8 December).

FOOD

The food and drink chapter (p77 and p69) bursts with succulent information about French gastronomy.

In this book's restaurant listings, we almost always indicate the price of *menus* (two- or three-course set menus), the quickie lunchtime version of which is also known as a *formule* (literally 'formula'). Ordering à la carte (choosing individual items from the menu) generally works out to be rather more expensive.

At eateries listed under 'budget', *menus* cost up to €15. At midrange places, with more atmosphere and seasonal specialities, *menus* go for €15 to €50. Top-end restaurants – some with one to three Michelin stars – have impeccable service, outstanding cuisine and *menus* costing anything upwards of €50.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

France is one of Europe's most liberal countries when it comes to homosexuality, in part because of a long tradition of public tolerance towards people who choose not to live by conventional social codes. Paris has been a thriving gay and lesbian centre since the late 1970s. Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon, Montpellier, Toulouse and many other towns also have significant active communities. Attitudes towards homosexuality tend to be more conservative in the countryside and villages. France's lesbian scene is less public than its gay male counterpart and is centred mainly on women's cafés and bars, also the best places to find information.

Gay Pride marches (opposite) are held in major French cities in mid-May to early July.

Internet Resources

CitéGAY (www.citegay.fr, in French) Low-down on gay and lesbian events.

France Queer Resources Directory (www.france.qrd.org, in French) Directory for gays and lesbians, including matters of interest to travellers.

French Government Tourist Office (<http://us.franceguide.com/Special-Interests/Gay-friendly>) Information about 'the gay-friendly destination par excellence'.

Gayscape (www.gayscape.com) Hundreds of links to gay- and lesbian-related sites.

Tasse de Thé (www.tassedethe.com, in French) A *webzine lesbien* with lots of useful links.

Organisations

Most major gay and lesbian organisations are based in Paris:

Act Up-Paris (Map pp132-3; ☎ 01 48 06 13 89; www.actupparis.org, in French; 45 rue Sedaine, 11e;

📍 **Voltaire**) An activist group focusing on the battle against HIV/AIDS and the rights of people who are *séropositif* (have tested positive for HIV).

AIDES (Map pp114-15; ☎ 08 20 16 00 11, 01 53 27 63 00; www.aides.org; 119 rue des Pyrénées, 20e;

📍 **Jourdain**) France-wide activist organisation bringing together people directly and indirectly affected by AIDS.

Association des Médecins Gais (☎ 01 48 05 81 71; www.medecins-gays.org, in French; 63 rue Beaubourg, 3e; 📍 **Rambuteau**) Association of Gay Doctors, based in the Centre Lesbien Gai Bi & Trans; deals with gay-related health issues.

Centre Lesbien Gai Bi & Trans (LGBT; Map pp126-7; ☎ 01 43 57 21 47; www.cglparis.org, in French; 63 rue Beaubourg, 3e; 📍 **Rambuteau**;

🕒 6-8pm Mon, 4-8pm Tue, 12.30-8pm Wed, Fri & Sat, 3-8pm Thu, 4-7pm Sun, women-only 8-10pm 1st & 3rd Fri of month) A welcome and support centre.

SIDA Info service (☎ 08 00 84 08 00; www.sida-info-service.org, in French) HIV/AIDS information service that helps with anonymous HIV testing and treatment; advice available in foreign languages.

Publications

Damron (www.damron.com) Publishes English-language international travel guides, including the *Damron Women's Traveller* for lesbians and the *Damron Men's Travel Guide* for gays.

Gayvox (www.gayvox.com/guide3, in French) Online travel guide to France, with listings by region.

Lesbia French-language lesbian monthly with articles and useful listings.

Spartacus International Gay Guide (www.spartacusworld.com) Annual English-language travel guide for men.

Têtu (www.tetu.com, in French) A glossy monthly that bills itself as *le magazine des gais et des lesbiennes*. Has a France-wide directory of bars, clubs and hotels.

HOLIDAYS

The following *jours fériés* (public holidays) are observed in France:

New Year's Day (Jour de l'An) 1 January – parties in larger cities; fireworks are subdued by international standards.

Easter Sunday & Monday (Pâques & lundi de Pâques) Late March/April.

May Day (Fête du Travail) 1 May – traditional parades.

Victoire 1945 8 May – commemorates the Allied victory in Europe that ended WWII.

Ascension Thursday (Ascension) May – celebrated on the 40th day after Easter.

Pentecost/Whit Sunday & Whit Monday (Pentecôte & lundi de Pentecôte) Mid-May to mid-June – celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Easter.

Bastille Day/National Day (Fête Nationale) 14 July – the national holiday.

Assumption Day (Assomption) 15 August.

All Saints' Day (Toussaint) 1 November.

Remembrance Day (L'onze novembre) 11 November – marks the WWI armistice.

Christmas (Noël) 25 December.

The following are *not* public holidays in France: Shrove Tuesday (Mardi Gras; the first day of Lent); Maundy (or Holy) Thursday and Good Friday, just before Easter; and Boxing Day (26 December).

Note: Good Friday and Boxing Day *are* public holidays in Alsace.

INSURANCE

See p978 for health insurance and p973 for car insurance.

Travel Insurance

Getting travel insurance to cover theft, loss and medical problems is highly recommended. Some policies specifically exclude dangerous activities such as scuba diving, motorcycling, skiing and even trekking so read the fine print. Check that the policy covers ambulances or an emergency flight home.

You may prefer a policy that pays doctors or hospitals directly rather than reimbursing you for expenditures after the fact. If you have to claim later, make sure you keep all documentation.

Paying for your airline ticket with a credit card often provides limited travel accident insurance – ask your credit-card company what it's prepared to cover.

INTERNET ACCESS

Wireless access points can now be found at major airports, in many (if not most) hotels and at lots of cafés. Many tourist offices tout wi-fi hot spots that let laptop owners hook up for free.

Internet cafés can be found in towns and cities countrywide; they are listed under Information in the regional chapters. Prices range from €2 to €6 per hour. Public libraries (*bibliothèques* or *médiathèques*) often have free or inexpensive internet access, though

WHAT THE COMPUTER ICON MEANS

Throughout this guide, only accommodation providers that have an actual computer that guests can use to access the internet are flagged with a computer icon (🖥️); those that offer wi-fi access, but have no computer, are not. Paris is the exception: places offering wi-fi only as well as places offering the use of a computer receive the 🖥️ icon in the Paris chapter.

hours are limited and you may have to fill in some forms.

If you'll be accessing dial-up ISPs with your laptop, you'll need a telephone-plug adaptor, available at large supermarkets.

For useful national French websites, see p20.

LAUNDRY

Virtually all French cities and towns have at least one *laverie libre-service* (self-service laundrette), mentioned in town listings under Information. In most, *machines à laver* (washing machines), *séchoirs* (dryers) and the *lessive* (washing powder) dispenser are operated by a *centrale de paiement* (central payment gadget) that runs on coins – bring plenty in various denominations in case the change-maker is on the fritz. In general, you punch in the number of the machine you'd like to operate and insert coins in the sum indicated; the machine will then launch automatically so make sure you've already chosen your temperature and cycle.

Useful vocabulary includes *blanc* (whites), *couleur* (colours), *synthétique* (synthetics), *laine* (wool), *prélavage* (prewash cycle), *lavage* (wash cycle), *rinçage* (rinse cycle) and *essorage* (spin-dry cycle).

LEGAL MATTERS Drugs & Alcohol

Contrary to popular belief, French law does not distinguish between 'hard' and 'soft' drugs. The penalty for any personal use of *stupéfiants* (including cannabis, amphetamines, ecstasy and heroin) can be a one-year jail sentence and a €3750 fine, but depending on the circumstances it might be anything from a stern word to a compulsory rehab program.

Importing, possessing, selling or buying drugs can get you up to 10 years' prison and a fine of up to €500,000. Police have been known to search chartered coaches, cars and train passengers for drugs just because they're coming from Amsterdam.

Ivresse (drunkenness) in public is punishable by a €150 fine.

Police

French police have wide powers of search and seizure and can ask you to prove your identity at any time – whether or not there is 'probable cause'. Foreigners must be able to prove their legal status in France (eg passport, visa, residency permit) without delay.

If the police stop you for any reason, be polite and remain calm. Verbally (and of course physically) abusing a police officer can lead to a hefty fine, and even imprisonment. You may refuse to sign a police statement, and have the right to ask for a copy. People who are arrested are considered innocent until proven guilty, but can be held in custody until trial.

Because of the threat of terrorism, French police are very strict about security. Do not leave baggage unattended, especially at airports or train stations: suspicious objects may be summarily blown up.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Metropolitan France (the mainland and Corsica) is made up of 22 *régions* (regions), which group the country's 96 *départements* (departments), each ruled by a Paris-appointed *préfet* (prefect) who rules from the departmental capital, the *préfecture*. *Départements* are subdivided into 324 *arrondissements*, which are in turn subdivided into *cantons*, which are split into 36,400 *communes*.

LEGAL AGE

- Driving: 18
- Buying alcohol: 16
- Age of majority: 18
- Age of sexual consent for everyone: 15
- Age considered minor under anti-child-pornography and child-prostitution laws: 18
- Voting: 18

Almost always named after a geographic feature, *départements* have two-digit codes (see the map, p954) that do extra duty as the first two digits of all postcodes.

MAPS

France's two major map publishers are **Michelin** (<http://boutiquecartesetguides.michelin.fr>, in French, www.viamichelin.com for online maps) and the **Institut Géographique National** (IGN; www.ign.fr), which also publishes themed maps showing wine regions, museums and so on. Countrywide, road and city maps are available at Maisons de la Presse (large newsagencies), bookshops, tourist offices and newspaper kiosks. In Paris, the full range of IGN maps is on offer at **Espace IGN** (Map pp118-19; ☎ 01 43 98 80 00; 107 rue la Boétie, Paris 8e; 📍 Franklin D Roosevelt).

The book in your hand contains around 140 city and town maps; Lonely Planet also publishes a laminated *Paris City Map*. Plans-Guides Blay (www.blayfoldex.com, in French) produces over 180 orange-jacketed street maps of French cities and towns. Michelin has excellent city maps of Paris and Lyon.

Michelin's green-jacketed *Environs de Paris* and *Banlieue de Paris* maps (€4.30), both available from airport newsagents, will help you with the very confusing drive into and out of Paris. Michelin's yellow-orange 1:200,000 scale (1cm = 2km) regional maps (€6.50) are perfect for cross-country driving; if you'll be covering more than a few regions the national *Atlas Routier France* (€15.90) is better value.

The IGN also has regional fold-out maps as well as an all-France volume, *France – Routes, Autoroutes*.

Walking & Cycling

The **FFRP** (www.ffrp.asso.fr, in French) publishes around 120 *topoguides* – map-equipped booklets about major trails (eg GRs) – in French. Local organisations also produce *topoguides* that supply details on trail conditions, flora, fauna, mountain shelters and so on; ask for these at tourist offices and local bookshops.

IGN has a variety of great *topoguides* and 1:50,000-scale maps that are ideal for hiking, biking or walking. Its specialised *cyclocartes* (cycle maps) show dozens of suggested bicycle tours around France.

RÉGIONS & DÉPARTEMENTS



ALSACE

- 67 Bas-Rhin
68 Haut-Rhin

AQUITAINE

- 24 Dordogne
33 Gironde
40 Landes
47 Lot-et-Garonne
64 Pyrénées-Atlantiques

AUVERGNE

- 03 Allier
15 Cantal
43 Haute-Loire
63 Puy-de-Dôme

BASSE-NORMANDIE

- 14 Calvados
50 Manche
61 Orne

BOURGOGNE

- 21 Côte-d'Or
58 Nièvre
71 Saône-et-Loire
89 Yonne

BRETAGNE

- 22 Côte-d'Armor
29 Finistère
35 Ille-et-Vilaine
56 Morbihan

CENTRE

- 18 Cher
28 Eure-et-Loir
36 Indre
37 Indre-et-Loire
45 Loiret
41 Loir-et-Cher

CHAMPAGNE-ARDENNE

- 08 Ardennes
10 Aube
51 Marne
52 Haute-Marne

CORSE

- 2A Corse-du-Sud
2B Haute-Corse

FRANCHE-COMTÉ

- 25 Doubs
39 Jura
70 Haute-Saône
90 Territoire de Belfort

HAUTE-NORMANDIE

- 27 Eure
76 Seine-Maritime

ÎLE-DE-FRANCE

- 91 Essonne
92 Haut-de-Seine
75 Paris
78 Seine-et-Marne
93 Seine-St-Denis
94 Val-de-Marne
95 Val-d'Oise
77 Yvelines

LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON

- 11 Aude
30 Gard
34 Hérault
48 Lozère
66 Pyrénées-Orientales

LIMOUSIN

- 19 Corrèze
23 Creuse
87 Haute-Vienne

LORRAINE

- 54 Meurthe-et-Moselle
55 Meuse
57 Moselle
88 Vosges

MIDI-PYRÉNÉES

- 09 Ariège
12 Aveyron
32 Gers
31 Haute-Garonne
65 Hautes-Pyrénées
46 Lot
81 Tarn
82 Tarn-et-Garonne

NORD-PAS-DE-CALAIS

- 59 Nord
62 Pas-de-Calais

PAYS DE LA LOIRE

- 44 Loire-Atlantique
49 Maine-et-Loire
53 Mayenne
72 Sarthe
85 Vendée

PICARDIE

- 02 Aisne
60 Oise
80 Somme

POITOU-CHARENTES

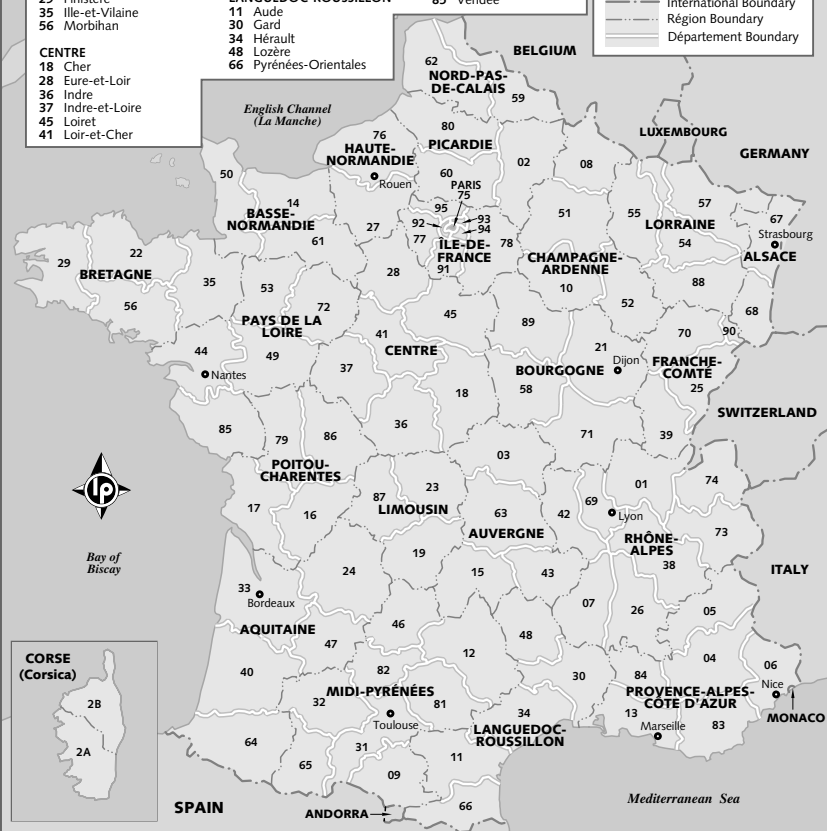
- 16 Charente
17 Charente-Maritime
79 Deux-Sèvres
86 Vienne

PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR

- 04 Alpes-de-Haute-Provence
06 Alpes-Maritimes
13 Bouches-du-Rhône
05 Hautes-Alpes
83 Var
84 Vaucluse

RHÔNE-ALPES

- 01 Ain
07 Ardèche
26 Drôme
74 Haute-Savoie
38 Isère
42 Loire
69 Rhône
73 Savoie



MONEY

ATMs

Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) – known as *distributeurs automatiques de billets* (DAB) or *points d'argent* in French – are the cheapest and most convenient way to get money. ATMs connected to international networks are situated in all cities and towns and usually offer an excellent exchange rate.

Cash

You always get a better exchange rate in-country but it's a good idea to arrive in France with enough euros to take a taxi to a hotel if you have to.

Credit & Debit Cards

Credit and debit cards are convenient, relatively secure and usually offer a better exchange rate than travellers cheques or cash exchanges. Credit cards issued in France have embedded chips – you have to type in a PIN code to make a purchase.

Credit cards are accepted almost everywhere in France. Visa, MasterCard and Amex can be used in shops and supermarkets and for train travel, car rentals and motorway tolls, though some places (eg 24-hour petrol stations, some autoroute toll machines) only take French-style credit cards with chips and PINs (for security reasons, these are now being issued by more and more banks worldwide). Don't assume that you can pay for a meal or a budget hotel with a credit card – inquire first.

Cash advances are a supremely convenient way to stay stocked up with euros. However, getting cash with a credit card involves both fees (sometimes US\$10 or more) and interest – ask your credit-card issuer for details. Debit-card fees are usually much less.

For lost cards, these numbers operate 24 hours:

Amex (☎ 01 47 77 72 00)

Diners Club (☎ 08 10 31 41 59)

MasterCard (☎ 08 00 90 13 87)

Visa (Carte Bleue; ☎ 08 00 90 11 79)

Currency

The euro has been the official currency of France since 2002. One euro is divided into 100 cents or centimes, with one-, two-, five-, 10-, 20- and 50-centime coins. Notes come in denominations of five, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 euros. Euro notes and coins issued

in France are valid throughout the other 14 countries in the euro zone: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain.

Exchange rates at publication time are given on the inside front cover of this book and a guide to costs can be found on p18.

Moneychangers

Commercial banks usually charge a stiff €3 to €5 fee per foreign-currency transaction – if they even bother to offer exchange services any more. In Paris and major cities, *bureaux de change* (exchange bureaux) are faster and easier, open longer hours and often give better rates than banks. Some post-office branches exchange travellers cheques and banknotes in a variety of currencies but charge a €5 commission for cash; most won't take US\$100 bills.

Tipping

By law, restaurant and bar prices are *service compris* (include a 15% service charge) so there's no expectation of a *pourboire* (tip), though if you're satisfied you might leave a few coins (for a cup of coffee) or round up to the nearest euro or two. Except in very upscale establishments, that is, where 5% is the norm. Taxi drivers are usually tipped 10%. If you stay in a hotel for several days, it's good form to leave €1 or €2 for the people who clean your room (more in top-end places, where the porter, the bellboy and other staff should be tipped if you've asked them to carry out extra services).

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques, a relic of the 19th and 20th centuries, cannot be used to pay most French merchants directly and so have to be changed into euro banknotes at banks, exchange bureaux or post offices.

POST

French post offices are flagged with a yellow or brown sign reading 'La Poste'. Since La Poste also has banking, finance and bill-paying functions, queues can be long but automatic machines dispense postage stamps.

Postal Rates

Domestic letters (including to French overseas territories) weighing up to 20g cost €0.55.

For international post, a letter/package under 20g/2kg costs €0.65/12.30 to Zone 1 (EU and Switzerland) and €0.85/14 to Zone 2 (the rest of the world). Worldwide express-mail delivery, called **Chronopost** (☎ 08 10 82 18 21; www.fr.chronopost.com), costs a fortune and may not be as rapid as advertised.

All mail to France *must* include the five-digit *code postal* (postcode/ZIP code), which begins with the two-digit number of the *département*. For French postcodes, see www.france-codepostal.fr/en or www.codeposte.com (in French). The notation 'CEDEX' after a town name simply means that mail sent to that address is collected at the post office, rather than delivered to the door.

SHOPPING

France is renowned for its luxury goods, particularly haute couture, high-quality clothing accessories (eg Hermès scarves), lingerie, perfume and cosmetics. However, such goods may not be any cheaper in France than at home.

Soldes (sales) – held, by law, for three weeks in January and July – offer significant discounts and can be a gold mine for fashionistas. The budget-conscious should also look out for the words *dégriffés* (name-brand products with the labels cut out) or *dépôt-vente* (ex-showroom garments sold at steep mark-downs). Factory-outlet shops can be found in Troyes (p369) and Calais (p238).

For local arts and crafts go directly to the source. In Brittany, look for colourful Quimper *faïence* (earthenware), and in Normandy you can pick up Rouen *faïence* or intricate lace from Alençon. Other possibilities include deluxe crystal and glassware from Baccarat in southern Lorraine or enamel and porcelain from Limoges in Limousin.

Wines from Bordeaux, Burgundy, Alsace and Champagne are available all around France but you'll find a better selection at local wine shops. Buying direct from wineries – after a *dégustation* (tasting session), of course – is an even more enjoyable option! Local brandies make good souvenirs since they may not be available in your home country; look out for cognacs (from Cognac!), Calvados (apple brandy), *pommeau* (a mixture of unfermented apple juice and Calvados) or Fécamp *Bénédictine* (from Normandy). Corsicans sell unusual liqueurs in local mar-

kets, and Charentes is the place to pick up Pineau de Charentes.

Goodies that travel well include macarons from St-Émilion and Alsace, *calissons* (a chewy, marzipan-like sweet) from Aix-en-Provence and candied fruit from Nice. For information on local shopping options, see the individual towns and cities.

In some shops and department stores, non-EU residents can arrange a rebate of some of the 19.6% value-added tax (VAT) if they spend enough. There are forms to fill out in-store, which must be shown, with the purchases, as you leave the country (eg at an airport).

SOLO TRAVELLERS

Travelling solo in France is easy and rewarding. One economic drawback, though, is that single rooms tend to cost almost as much as doubles. It is quite common for people to eat in restaurants alone in France, particularly at lunch. Women travelling alone are unlikely to encounter any particular problems beyond some minor hassles (for more information, see p959).

TELEPHONE

Four decades ago France had one of the worst telephone systems in Western Europe but thanks to massive investment, the country now has one of the most modern – and overpriced – telecommunications systems in the world.

Domestic Dialling

French telephone numbers have 10 digits, except for a few commercial access numbers that have four digits and some emergency numbers that have just two or three. Emergency numbers (see inside the front cover) can be dialled from public phones without a phonenumber card.

Numbers beginning with ☎ 08 00 or ☎ 08 05 are free but other ☎ 08 numbers are not – per-minute tariffs include €0.12 for ☎ 08 20 and ☎ 08 21, €0.15 for ☎ 08 25 and ☎ 08 26, and €0.34 for ☎ 08 92; a ☎ 08 10 number costs the same as a local call. French law requires that prices be marked wherever such numbers are publicised.

Dialling a mobile phone (ie a number that begins with ☎ 06) from a fixed-line phone or another mobile can be very expensive.

For France Telecom's *service des renseignements* (directory inquiries) dial ☎ 11 87 12 (€1.18 per call from a fixed-line phone). Not

all operators speak English. For help in English with all France Telecom's services, see www.francetelecom.com or call ☎ 08 00 36 47 75.

Hotels, *gîtes*, hostels and pensions are free to meter their calls as they like. The surcharge is usually around €0.30 per minute but can be higher.

Public Phones & Telephone Cards

To get explanations in English and other languages on how to use a public telephone, push the button engraved with a two-flags icon.

For both international and domestic calling, most public phones operate using either a credit card or two kinds of *télécartes* (phone-cards): *cartes à puce* (cards with a magnetic chip) issued by France Télécom and sold at post offices for €8 or €15; and *cartes à code* (cards that you can use from public or private phones by dialling a free access number and then the card's scratch-off code), marketed by an array of companies and sold at *tabacs*, newsagents and post offices.

Phonecards with codes offer *much* better international rates than do France Télécom chip cards or Country Direct services (for which you're billed at home by your long-distance carrier). The shop you buy a phonecard from should be able to tell you which type is best for the country you'd like to call. Using phonecards from a home phone is much cheaper than using them from public phones or mobile phones.

International Dialling

To call France from another country, dial your country's international access code, then ☎ 33 (France's country code), then the 10-digit local number *without* the initial ☎ 0.

To call internationally from France, dial ☎ 00 (the international access code), the *indicatif* (country code), the area code (without the initial zero if there is one) and the local number. Some country codes are posted in public telephones.

For directory inquiries for numbers outside France, dial ☎ 11 87 00 (€2 or €3).

To make a reverse-charges (collect) call (*en PCV*) or a person-to-person call (*avec préavis*) from France, dial ☎ 31 23. For the USA and Canada you can dial ☎ 08 00 99 00 11, and for Australia (Telstra) ☎ 08 00 99 00 61.

Mobile Phones

French mobile phones have numbers that begin with ☎ 06.

France uses GSM 900/1800, which is compatible with the rest of Europe and Australia but not with the North American GSM 1900 or the totally different system in Japan (though some North Americans have tri-band phones that work here). Check with your service provider about roaming charges – using a mobile phone outside your home country can be hideously expensive!

It may be cheaper to buy your own French SIM card – and locals you meet are much more likely to ring you if your number is French. If you already have a compatible phone, you can slip in a SIM card (€20 to €30) and rev it up with prepaid credit, though this is likely to run out fast as domestic prepaid calls cost about €0.50 a minute. Recharge cards are sold at most *tabacs* and newsagents. In general, SIMs that lie dormant for six months are deactivated.

SIMs are available at the ubiquitous outlets run by France's three mobile phone companies, **Bouygues** (☎ 08 10 63 01 00; www.bouygues-telecom.fr), France Telecom's **Orange** (www.orange.fr, in French) and **SFR** (☎ 08 11 70 70 73; www.sfr.com).

TIME

France uses the 24-hour clock and is on Central European Time, which is one hour ahead of GMT/UTC. During daylight-saving time, which runs from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October, France is two hours ahead of GMT/UTC.

Without taking daylight-saving time into account, when it's noon in Paris it's 3am in San Francisco, 6am in New York, 11am in London, 8pm in Tokyo, 9pm in Sydney and 11pm in Auckland. Australia's east coast is between eight and 10 hours ahead of France. Refer to the time-zone world map on pp1018–19 for additional data.

TOURIST INFORMATION Local Tourist Offices

Almost every city, town, village and hamlet has an *office de tourisme* (a tourist office run by some unit of local government) or *syndicat d'initiative* (a tourist office run by an organisation of local merchants). Both are excellent resources and can supply you with local maps as well as details on accommodation, restaurants and activities. If you have a special interest such as walking, cycling, architecture or wine sampling, ask about it. Many tourist offices make local hotel and B&B reservations,

sometimes for a small fee. Some have limited currency-exchange services. Details on tourist offices appear under Information at the beginning of each city, town or area listing.

Comités régionaux de tourisme (CRTs; regional tourist boards), their *départemental* analogues (CDTs), and their websites are a superb source of information and hyperlinks. CRT websites can be found at www.fnct.com (in French).

Tourist Offices Abroad

French government tourist offices (usually called Maisons de la France) provide every imaginable sort of tourist information on France. See www.franceguide.com for links to country-specific websites.

Australia (☎ 02-9231 5244; Level 13, 25 Bligh St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

Canada (☎ 514-288 2026; Ste 1010, 1800 McGill College Ave, Montreal, Quebec H3A 3J6)

UK (☎ 09068-244 123; Lincoln House, 300 High Holborn, London WC1V 7JH)

USA New York (☎ 514-288-1904; 29th fl, 825 Third Ave, entrance on 50th St, New York, NY 10022); Los Angeles (☎ 310-271-6665; 9454 Wilshire Bd, Ste 210, Beverly Hills, CA 90212-2967)

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

France is not well equipped for *handicapés* (people with disabilities): cobblestone streets are a nightmare to navigate in a wheelchair; kerb ramps are often lacking; older public facilities and budget hotels frequently lack lifts; and the Paris metro, most of it built decades ago, is hopeless. But travellers with disabilities who would like to visit France can overcome these difficulties.

Tourisme et Handicaps (☎ 01 44 11 10 41; www.tourisme-handicaps.org, in French; 43 rue Marx Dormoy, 18e, Paris) issues the 'Tourisme et Handicap' label to tourist sites, restaurants and hotels that comply with strict accessibility and usability standards. Different symbols indicate the sort of access afforded to people with physical, mental, hearing and/or visual disabilities.

Details on rail access for people with disabilities appear in the SNCF's French-language booklet *Guide des Voyageurs Handicapés et à Mobilité Réduite*, available at train stations. You can also contact the **Centre du Service Accès Plus** (☎ 08 90 64 06 50; www.accessibilite.sncf.fr, in French), to check station accessibility or to arrange for a *fauteuil roulant* (wheelchair) or to receive help getting on or

off a train. For the Paris region, contact **Accès Plus Transilien** (☎ 08 10 76 74 33; www.infomobi.com).

Access Project (www.accessproject-phsp.org; 39 Bradley Gardens, West Ealing, London W13 8HE) publishes a useful guide, *Access in Paris*, which was recently updated and can be downloaded as PDF files. The **Paris Convention & Visitors Bureau** (p137) also has information and brochures.

If you speak French, **Petit Futé** (www.petitfute.fr, in French) publishes a national guide, *Handitourisme* (€16), and the portal www.jaccede.com (in French) has loads of information and reviews. **Mobile en Ville** (www.mobile-en-ville.asso.fr) works to make Paris wheelchair accessible and publishes *Paris Comme sur les Roulettes*, which showcases 20 tours of the city.

Michelin's *Guide Rouge* uses icons to indicate hotels with lifts and with facilities that make them at least partly accessible to people with disabilities, while Gîtes de France (see p940) can provide details on *gîtes ruraux* and *chambres d'hôtes* with 'disabled access' (this is one of their website's search criteria).

Specialised travel agencies abroad include UK-based **Access Travel** (☎ in UK 01942-888 844; www.access-travel.co.uk).

Tourism for All (☎ in UK 0845-124 9971; www.tourismforall.info) is a UK-based group that provides tips and information for travellers with disabilities.

VISAS

For up-to-date details on visa requirements, see the **French Foreign Affairs Ministry site** (www.diplomatie.gouv.fr) and click 'Going to France'.

EU nationals and citizens of Iceland, Norway and Switzerland need only a passport or a national identity card in order to enter France and stay in the country. However, nationals of the 12 countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 are subject to various limitations on living and working in France.

Citizens of Australia, Canada, Israel, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, the USA and many Latin American countries do not need visas to visit France as tourists for up to 90 days.

Other people wishing to come to France as tourists have to apply for a **Schengen Visa**, named after the agreements that abolished passport controls between 15 European countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. It allows un-

limited travel throughout the entire zone for a 90-day period. Application should be made to the consulate of the country you are entering first, or that will be your main destination. Among other things, you will need travel and repatriation insurance and be able to show that you have sufficient funds to support yourself.

Tourist visas *cannot* be extended except in emergencies (such as medical problems). When your visa expires you'll need to leave and reapply from outside France.

Carte de Séjour

EU passport-holders and citizens of Switzerland, Iceland and Norway do not need a *carte de séjour* (residence permit) to reside or work in France.

Nationals of other countries with long-stay visas must contact the local *mairie* (city hall) or *préfecture* (prefecture) to apply for a *carte de séjour*. Usually, you are required to do so within eight days of arrival in France. Make sure you have all the necessary documents before you arrive.

Students of all nationalities studying in Paris must apply for a *carte de séjour* either through their university (if the option exists) or at the **Centre des Étudiants Étrangers** (Map pp124-5; 13 rue Miollis, 15e, Paris; **M** Cambronne or Ségur) in Paris. For more information see the website of Paris' **Préfecture de Police** (www.prefecture-police-paris.interieur.gouv.fr, in French).

Long-Stay & Student Visas

EU nationals and citizens of Iceland, Norway and Switzerland do not require visas for stays of over 90 days in France but everybody else does. Contact the French embassy or consulate nearest your residence and begin your application well in advance as it can take months. Tourist visas cannot be changed into student visas after arrival. However, short-term visas are available for students sitting university-entrance exams in France.

Working Holiday Visa

Citizens of Australia, Canada, Japan and New Zealand aged between 18 and 30 are eligible for a 12-month, multiple-entry Working Holiday Visa, allowing combined tourism and employment in France. You have to apply to the embassy or consulate in your home country and must prove you have a return ticket, insurance and sufficient funding to get you

through the start of your stay. Apply early as there are annual quotas.

Once you have arrived in France and have found a job, you must apply for an *autorisation provisoire de travail* (temporary work permit), which will only be valid for the duration of the employment offered. The permit can be renewed under the same conditions up to the limit of the authorised length of stay. You can also study or do training programs but the visa cannot be extended, nor can it be turned into a student visa. After one year you *must* go home.

Once in France, the Centre d'Information et Documentation Jeunesse (CIDJ; p960) can help with information.

VOLUNTEERING

Websites like www.volunteerabroad.com and www.transitionsabroad.com throw up a colourful selection of volunteering opportunities in France: helping out on a family farm in the Alps, restoring an historic monument in Provence or participating in a summertime archaeological excavation are but some of the golden opportunities awaiting those keen to volunteer their skills and services.

Interesting volunteer organisations include the following:

Rempart (Map pp126-7; ☎ 01 42 71 96 55; www.rempart.com; 1 rue des Guillemites, 4e, Paris) Brings together 170 organisations countrywide committed to preserving France's religious, military, civil, industrial and natural heritage.

Volunteers for Peace (☎ 802-259-2759; www.vfp.org; 1034 Tiffany Rd, Belmont, Vermont 05730 USA) Can link you up with a voluntary service project dealing with social work, the environment, education or the arts.

World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF; www.woof.org & www.woof.fr) Work on a small farm or other organic venture (harvesting chestnuts, renovating an abandoned olive farm near Nice etc).

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

For information about health issues while travelling, see p980.

Safety Precautions

Women tend to attract more unwanted attention than men but need not walk around in fear; people are rarely assaulted on the street. Be aware of your surroundings and of situations that could be dangerous: empty streets, lonely beaches, dark corners of large train stations. Using metros late at night is generally OK, as stations are rarely deserted, but

there are a few in Paris that it's best to avoid (see p137).

In some places women may have to deal with what might be called low-intensity sexual harassment: 'playful' comments and invitations that can become overbearing or aggressive, and which some women find threatening or offensive. Remain polite and keep your distance. Hearing a foreign accent may provoke further unwanted attention.

Be alert to vibes in cheap hotels, sometimes staffed by apparently unattached men who may pay far more attention to your comings and goings than you would like. Change hotels if you feel uncomfortable, or allude to the imminent arrival of your husband (whether you have one or not).

On overnight trains, you may prefer to ask (when reserving) if there's a women's compartment available. If your compartment companions are overly attentive, don't hesitate to ask the conductor for a change of compartment. Sleeping cars, which have their own bathrooms, offer greater security than a couchette.

In an emergency, contact the **police** (☎ 17), who will take you to the hospital if you have been attacked or injured. You can reach France's national **rape crisis hotline** (☎ 08 00 05 95 95; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri) toll-free from any telephone without using a phonecard.

Organisations

The women-only **Maison des Femmes de Paris** (Map pp134-5; ☎ 01 43 43 41 13; <http://maisondesfemmes.free.fr>, in French; 163 rue de Charenton, 12e, Paris; ☎ Reuilly Diderot; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri) is a meeting place for women of all ages and nationalities.

WORK

EU nationals, except those from the 12 countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, have an automatic right to work in France. Pretty much anyone else who'd like a French job will need a hard-to-get work permit, issued at

the request of your employer, who will have to show that no one in France – or the entire European Economic Area – can do your job. Exceptions may be made for artists, computer engineers and translation specialists.

Working 'in the black' (that is, without documents) is difficult and risky for non-EU nationals. The only instance in which the government turns a blind eye to workers without documents is during fruit harvests (mid-May to November) and the *vendange* (grape harvest; mid-September to mid- or late October).

Au-pair work is also very popular and can be done legally even by non-EU citizens. To apply, contact a placement agency from your home country at least three months in advance.

For details on a Working Holiday Visa, see p959.

EU Nationals

EU nationals with the right to work in France can find summer and casual work in restaurants, bars and hotels (particularly in the Alps during the winter skiing season; for bar work check out www.mountainpub.com). Teaching English is another option, either for a company or through private lessons. Paris-based mag **FUSAC** (France USA Contacts; www.fusac.fr) advertises jobs for English speakers, including au-pair work, babysitting and language teaching.

France's national employment service, the **Agence National pour l'Emploi** (ANPE; www.anpe.fr, in French), has offices throughout France; the website has job listings.

The **Centre d'Information et de Documentation Jeunesse** (CIDJ; www.cidj.com, in French) provides young people with information on jobs (including seasonal summer jobs), housing, education and more. It has offices all over France, including **Paris** (Map pp124-5; ☎ 01 44 49 12 00; 101 quai Branly, 15e; ☎ Champ de Mars).

Transport

CONTENTS

Getting There & Away	961
Entering The Country	961
Air	961
Land	963
Sea	965
Getting Around	968
Air	969
Bicycle	969
Boat	970
Bus	970
Car & Motorcycle	971
Hitching	974
Local Transport	974
Tours	975
Train	975

GETTING THERE & AWAY

ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Entering France from other parts of the EU is usually a breeze – no border checkpoints and no customs – thanks to the Schengen Agreements, signed and fully implemented by all of France's neighbours except the UK, the Channel Islands and Switzerland. For these three entities, old-fashioned document and customs checks are still the norm, at least when exiting France.

If you're arriving from a non-EU country, you will have to show your passport (and your visa if you need one – see p958) or EU identity card, and clear customs.

AIR

Budget carriers account for an increasing share of intra-European flights.

Airports

France's two major international airports, both just outside Paris, are **Roissy Charles de Gaulle** (☎ 01 48 62 22 80; www.aeroportsdeparis.fr; airport code CDG) and **Orly** (☎ 01 49 75 15 15; www.aeroportsdeparis.fr; airport code ORY). For details, see p198.

THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change, especially as the price of oil skyrockets. Check directly with the transport provider or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and the ticket you may buy) works, and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

French airports with significant international services, mainly within Europe and to North Africa include the following:

Bordeaux (☎ 05 56 34 50 50; www.bordeaux.aeroport.fr; airport code BOD)

Lille (☎ 03 20 49 67 47, 08 91 67 32 10; www.lille.aeroport.fr; airport code LIL)

Lyon (☎ 08 26 80 08 26; www.lyon.aeroport.fr; airport code LYS)

Marseille (☎ 04 42 14 14 14; www.mrsairport.com; airport code MRS)

Mulhouse-Basel-Freiburg (EuroAirport; ☎ 03 89 90 31 11; www.euroairport.com; airport codes MLH, BSL, EAP)

Nantes (☎ 02 40 84 80 00; www.nantes.aeroport.fr; airport code NTE)

Nice (☎ 08 20 42 33 33; www.nice.aeroport.fr; airport code NCE)

Strasbourg (☎ 03 88 64 67 67; www.strasbourg.aeroport.fr; airport code SXB)

Toulouse (☎ 08 25 38 00 00; www.toulouse.aeroport.fr; airport code TLS)

Smaller provincial airports with international flights, mainly to/from the UK, continental Europe and North Africa, include Angoulême, Beauvais-Tillé (Paris-Beauvais), Bergerac, Béziers, Biarritz, Brest, Caen, Carcassonne, Deauville, Dinard, Grenoble, La Rochelle, Le Touquet, Limoges, Montpellier, Nîmes, Pau, Perpignan, Poitiers, Rennes, Rodez, St-Étienne, Toulon and Tours. Relevant local airports, including those on Corsica, are listed in destination chapters.

Airlines

The new Open Skies Agreement between the EU and the United States lets any European airline fly to any US destination and any US airline fly anywhere in the EU. As a result, unprecedented trans-Atlantic flight options are likely to start appearing.

Major airlines serving France include:

Aer Lingus (☎ 08 21 23 02 67; www.aerlingus.com; airline code EI; hub Dublin)

Air Canada (☎ 08 25 88 29 00; www.aircanada.ca; airline code AC; hub Toronto)

Air France (☎ 36 54; www.airfrance.com; airline code AF; hub Paris) France's flag carrier, now joined with KLM. Subsidiaries include Brit Air (www.britair.fr) and Régional (www.regional.com).

Alitalia (☎ 08 20 31 53 15; www.alitalia.com; airline code AZ; hub Rome)

American Airlines (☎ 01 55 17 43 41; www.americanairlines.com; airline code AA; hub Dallas)

Austrian Airlines (☎ 08 20 81 68 16; www.austrianairlines.com; airline code OS; hub Vienna)

BMI British Midland (☎ in UK 0870-6070 555 or 01332-64 8181; www.flybmi.com; airline code BD; hub London)

British Airways (☎ 08 25 82 54 00; www.britishairways.com; airline code BA; hub London)

Cathay Pacific (☎ 01 41 43 75 75; www.cathaypacific.com; airline code CX; hub Hong Kong)

Continental Airlines (☎ 01 71 23 03 35; www.continental.com; airline code CO; hub Houston)

Iberia (☎ 08 25 80 09 65; www.iberia.com; airline code IB; hub Madrid)

KLM (☎ 32 72; www.klm.com; airline code KL; hub Amsterdam) Now joined with Air France.

Lufthansa (☎ 08 26 10 33 34; www.lufthansa.com; airline code LH; hub Frankfurt)

Northwest Airlines (☎ 08 90 71 07 10; NWA; www.nwa.com) Works closely with KLM.

Olympic Airlines (☎ 01 44 94 58 58; www.olympicairlines.com; airline code OA; hub Athens)

Qantas Airways (☎ 08 11 98 00 02; www.qantas.com; airline code QF; hub Sydney)

Singapore Airlines (☎ 08 21 23 03 80; www.singaporeair.com; airline code SQ; hub Singapore)

South African Airways (☎ 08 25 80 09 69; www.flysaa.com; airline code SA; hub Johannesburg)

Thai Airways International (☎ 01 55 68 80 70; www.thaiair.com; airline code TG; hub Bangkok)

Turkish Airlines (☎ 08 25 80 09 02; www.thy.com; airline code TK; hub Istanbul)

An ever-morphing panoply of low-budget, no-frills carriers, many with strict baggage

weight limits, serve Paris and/or provincial French cities:

Aer Arann (www.aerarann.com) Links Ireland to cities on France's west coast.

Air Berlin (www.airberlin.com) Links EuroAirport (Mulhouse) and Nice with destinations around Western Europe.

Air Transat (www.airtransat.com) Flights from Canada.

Atlas Blue (www.atlas-blue.com) Moroccan budget airline.

BMI Baby (www.bmibaby.com) Budget subsidiary of BMI British Midland; generally offers good ticket flexibility.

Corsairfly (www.corsairfly.com) Links Paris with Quebec, the Caribbean, Morocco and the Indian Ocean.

easyJet (www.easyjet.com) UK budget carrier; also has domestic flights within France.

Flybe (www.flybe.com) Links a dozen French cities with the UK.

Flyglobespan (www.flyglobespan.com) Scottish budget carrier.

Germanwings (www.germanwings.com) Cologne-based German budget carrier.

Jet2.com (www.jet2.com) Links French cities with the UK.

Jet4you (www.jet4you.com) Flights to Morocco.

Myair (www.myair.com) Flights to Italy.

New Axis Airways (www.axis-airways.com) Marseille-based carrier serving Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

Ryanair (www.ryanair.com) Services from Ireland and the UK to destinations throughout France.

Transavia.com (www.transavia.com) Budget subsidiary of the Air France-KLM Group.

Tuifly (www.tuifly.com) German budget carrier.

Wizz Air (http://wizzair.com) Links Hungary and Poland with Beauvais-Tillé near Paris.

Tickets

Checking internet sites and scouring major newspapers' travel sections can result in significant savings on your air ticket. Start early: some of the cheapest tickets have to be bought well in advance.

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

Both **Flight Centre** (Australia ☎ 133 133; www.flightcentre.com.au; New Zealand ☎ 0800 24 35 44; www.flightcentre.co.nz) and **STA Travel** (Australia ☎ 1300 733 035; www.statravel.com.au; New Zealand ☎ 0508 782 872; www.statravel.co.nz) have branches throughout Australia and New Zealand. For online bookings, try www.travel.com.au.

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying and Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motorised travel generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travellers to offset the level of greenhouse gases they are responsible for with financial contributions to sustainable travel schemes that reduce global warming – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, support the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website, lonelyplanet.com.

CANADA

Travel Cuts ([f](https://www.facebook.com/travelcuts) 800-667-2887; www.travelcuts.com) is Canada's national student travel agency. For online bookings try www.expedia.ca and www.travelocity.ca.

UK & IRELAND

Advertisements for travel agencies appear in the travel pages of the weekend broadsheet newspapers, *Time Out* and the *Evening Standard*, as well as in the free online magazine *TNT* (www.tntmagazine.com), but some of the best deals are available direct from budget airlines.

Recommended travel agencies and online ticket sales:

ebookers.com (www.ebookers.com)

Flight Centre (www.flightcentre.co.uk)

Trailfinders (www.trailfinders.com)

USIT (www.usit.ie)

USA

San Francisco is the ticket consolidator capital of America, although some good deals can be found in Los Angeles, New York and other big cities.

The following agencies are recommended for online bookings:

CheapTickets (www.cheaptickets.com)

Expedia (www.expedia.com)

lowestfare.com (www.lowestfare.com)

Orbitz (www.orbitz.com)

STA Travel (www.statravel.com)

Travelocity (www.travelocity.com)

Other rock-bottom options for discounted trans-Atlantic air travel include stand-by and courier flights. For details:

Airhitch (www.airhitch.org)

Courier Travel (www.couriertravel.org)

International Association of Air Travel Couriers (www.courier.org)

LAND

Bus and train passes can often be effectively combined with discount airfares to keep travel costs down.

Bus

Europe's international buses are slower and less comfortable than trains but are considerably cheaper, especially if you are under 26 or over 60, or get a promotional fare.

BUSABOUT

Buses run by London-based **Busabout** ([f](https://www.facebook.com/busabout)) in UK 0207-950 1661; www.busabout.com; 1/2/3 loops

US\$639/1069/1319) link 29 continental European cities in nine countries every other day from early May to October.

You can travel at your own pace and hop on or off as you like. In many places, the pick-up/drop-off point is a central hostel. In France, which is on the Western Loop (one of three), stops are in Bordeaux, Tours, Paris, Avignon and Nice.

EUROLINES

Eurolines (☎ 08 92 89 90 91; www.eurolines.eu) is a grouping of 32 long-haul coach operators that link cities all across Europe and in Morocco and Russia. Return fares are about 20% cheaper than two one-ways. In summer it's best to make reservations at least two working days in advance.

From London, the standard one-way fare to Paris is UK£39 but Funfares, available online, can work out much cheaper. From Paris, a one-way ticket to London costs €32; supplements of €4 to €11 sometimes apply. Channel crossings are by ferry.

The Eurolines Travel Pass (www.eurolines-pass.eu) allows unlimited international travel for 15 or 30 days between 40 European cities, including eight in France – but you cannot use the pass to get from one French city to another.

Car & Motorcycle

Arriving in France by car is easy. At some border points you may be asked for a passport or EU national identity card (your driver's licence will not be sufficient ID). Police searches are not uncommon for vehicles entering France, particularly from Spain and Belgium (via which drugs from Morocco or the Netherlands can enter France). See p971 for details about driving in France.

EUROTUNNEL

The Channel Tunnel, inaugurated in 1994, is the first dry-land link between England and France since the last ice age.

High-speed **Eurotunnel shuttle trains** (☎ in UK 08705-35 35 35, in France 08 10 63 03 04; www.eurotunnel.com) whisk bicycles, motorcycles, cars and coaches from Folkestone through the Channel Tunnel to Coquelles, 5km southwest of Calais, in air-conditioned and soundproofed comfort in just 35 minutes. Shuttles run 24 hours a day, every day of the year, with up to three departures an hour during peak periods. LPG and

CNG tanks are not permitted, which eliminates gas-powered cars and many campers and caravans.

Eurotunnel sets its fares the way budget airlines do: the longer in advance you book and the lower the demand for a particular crossing, the less you pay; same-day fares can cost a fortune.

Depending on the date and, especially, the time of day, one-way car fares range from UK£49 to UK£145 (€69 to €217), including all passengers, unlimited luggage and taxes. The fee for a bicycle, including its rider, is UK£16 one-way; cyclists must make advance reservations (☎ in UK 01303-28 22 01).

Train

Rail services link France with virtually every country in Europe. For details on train travel within France, see p975.

You can book tickets and get information from **Rail Europe** (www.raileurope.com). In France ticketing is handled by **SNCF** (☎ in France 36 35, from abroad 08 92 35 35 35; www.sncf.com); telephone and internet bookings are possible but they won't post tickets outside France.

For details on Europe's 200,000km rail network, see www.railpassenger.info, set up by a grouping of European rail companies. Information on 'seamless high-speed rail travel' between France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria, and under the English Channel to London, is available from www.railteam.co.uk and www.tgv-europe.com.

Certain rail services between France and its continental neighbours are marketed under a number of peculiar brand names: **Alleo** heads to Germany; **Artésia** (www.artesia.eu) takes you to Italian cities such as Milan, Venice, Florence and Rome; **Elipsos** (www.elipsos.com) has luxurious 'train-hotel' services to Spain; and **TGV Lyria** (www.tgv-lyria.fr) takes passengers to Switzerland. **Thalys** (www.thalys.com) links Paris' Gare du Nord with destinations including Brussels-Midi (from €82, 82 minutes, up to 25 per day), Amsterdam CS (from €105, 4¼ hours, seven per day) and Cologne's Hauptbahnhof (€91, 3¾ hours, six per day).

A very useful resource is the information-packed website **The Man in Seat 61** (www.seat61.com).

The following are some sample train routes linking France with various cities in Europe.

Route	Full Fare (€)	Duration (hr)
Geneva–Lyon	22.90	2
Geneva–Marseille	50.20–76.40	4½–8
Vienna–Strasbourg	133.40	10
Brussels–Paris	82	1½
Rome–Nice	51.50	8½–10
Berlin–Paris	179.50	9
Frankfurt–Paris	99	4
Amsterdam–Paris	105	4½
Barcelona–Montpellier	53	4½

EUROPEAN RAIL PASSES

Eurail Passes (www.eurail.com), available to non-European residents, are valid in up to 20 countries, including France. Benefits include a 'Pass-holder' discount on the London-to-Paris Eurostar (one-way/return UK£50/100); foot passenger discounts on Dover-Calais ferries (50% on SeaFrance and 25% on P&O); 30% off the adult pedestrian fare for Irish Ferries crossings between Ireland and France (make sure you book ahead); and 50% off trains in Corsica.

Residents of Europe can get an **InterRail Global Pass** (www.interrailnet.com) for travel in 30 countries except the one they live in.

These passes, worthwhile only if you plan to really clock up the kilometres, must be validated at a train-station ticket window before you begin your first journey. The best deals are available to people under 26.

EUROSTAR

Thanks to the long-awaited high-speed track recently put into operation in England, the highly civilised **Eurostar** (☎ in UK 08705-186 186, in France 08 92 35 35 39; www.eurostar.com) now whisks you between London and Paris in just 2¼ hours. Except late at night, trains link London (St Pancras International) with Paris (Gare du Nord; hourly), Calais (Calais-Fréthun; one hour, two or three daily), Lille (Gare Lille-Europe; 1½ hours, 10 daily) and Disneyland Resort Paris (2½ hours, one or two daily), with less frequent services departing from Ebbsfleet and Ashford, both in Kent. Ski trains – which, unlike airplanes, don't hasten the greenhouse processes that threaten the very existence of Alpine skiing – connect London and Ashford with the French Alps on weekends from late December to mid-April.

Eurostar offers a bewildering array of fares. A standard 2nd-class one-way/return ticket from London to Paris costs a whopping

UK£154.50/309 (€232.50/435), but super-discount returns go for as little as UK£59.

You'll get the best deals if you buy a return ticket, stay over a Saturday night, book well in advance (the cheapest fares sell out early) and don't mind nonexchangeability and nonrefundability. Special fares are also available if you're under 26 or over 60 on your departure date. Booking by phone incurs a UK£5 surcharge. Student travel agencies may have youth fares not available directly from Eurostar.

SEA

Tickets for car- and passenger-ferry travel to/from France are available from most travel agencies in France and the countries served, though it's generally cheapest to book online.

Except where noted, the prices given below are for standard one-way tickets; in some cases, return fares cost less than two one-way tickets. Prices vary tremendously according to the season (July and August are priciest) and demand. People under 25 and over 60 may qualify for discounts. Many companies charge a supplement if you book by phone.

If you're travelling with a vehicle, for safety reasons you are usually denied access to it during the voyage.

International ferry companies serving France:

Brittany Ferries (☎ in UK 0871-244 0744, in Ireland 021 4277 801, in France 08 25 82 88 28; www.brittany-ferries.co.uk, www.brittanyferries.ie)

Celtic Link Ferries (☎ in UK 0844-576 8834; www.celticlinkferries.com)

Comanav (☎ in Morocco, Casablanca office 22 30 24 12; www.comanav.ma, in French)

Comarit (☎ in Morocco, Tangier office 39 32 00 32; www.comarit.com, in French)

Condor Ferries (☎ in UK 0845-609 1024, in France 08 25 13 51 35; www.condorferries.com)

CTN (Compagnie Tunisienne de Navigation; ☎ Marseille office 04 91 91 55 71; www.ctn.com.tn)

HD Ferries (☎ in UK 0844-576 8831, in France 08 25 04 17 03; www.hdferries.com)

Irish Ferries (☎ in Ireland 0818 300 400, in France 08 10 00 13 57; in Cherbourg 02 33 23 44 44, in Roscoff 02 98 61 17 17; www.irishferries.ie, www.shamrock-irlande.com, in French)

LD Lines (☎ in UK 0844-576 8836, in France 08 25 30 43 04; www.ldlines.co.uk)

Manche Îles Express (☎ on Jersey 01534-880 756, on Guernsey 01481-701 316, in France 08 25 13 30 50; www.manche-iles-express.com)



Norfolk Line (☎ in UK 0870 8701 020, in France 03 28 59 01 01; www.norfolkline.com)

P&O Ferries (☎ in UK 08716 645 645, in France 08 25 12 01 56; www.poferries.com)

SeaFrance (☎ in UK 0870 5711 711, in France 08 25 82 60 00; www.seafrance.com)

SNCM (Société Nationale Maritime Corse-Méditerranée; ☎ in France 08 25 88 80 88; www.sncm.fr)

Speed Ferries (☎ in UK 0871-222 7456, in France 03 21 10 50 00; www.speedferries.com)

Transmanche Ferries (☎ in UK 0800-917 1201, in France 08 00 65 01 00; www.transmancheferries.com)

The Channel Islands

Passenger ferries run by **Manche Îles Express** link Normandy's west coast with Jersey, Guernsey (Guernsey) and Sark (Sercq); passage takes 45 to 70 minutes. The Granville-Jersey line runs at least three times a week (daily from May to September); lines from Carteret and/or Diélette operate almost daily from April to September. Same-day return fares cost €39 to €50 (€23.50 to €30.50 for a child).

Year-round, fast car ferries run by **HD Ferries** and **Condor Ferries** link the Breton port of St-Malo with Jersey (one to 1½ hours) and Guernsey (1½ to 2½ hours). On HD Ferries, whose services run daily in summer and four times a week in winter, one-way passage for two adults with a small car costs €58 to €75 to Jersey and €60 to €91 to Guernsey.

Ireland

Irish Ferries has overnight services from Rosslare to either Cherbourg (17½ hours) or Roscoff (17½ hours; mid-May to mid-September only) every other day (three times a week from October to May, except late December and January). One-way, foot passengers pay €56 to €69, while a car with a driver costs from €99 to €230, not including a reserved seat (€15) or a cabin (from €80 to €95 for a two-berth cabin). Bicycles cost €10.

A mainly freight ship run by **Celtic Link Ferries** links Rosslare with Cherbourg (18½ hours, two or three weekly except mid-December to mid-January). A car with a driver costs €119 to €269, not including a mandatory sleeping berth. Foot passengers are not allowed.

From about March to early November, **Brittany Ferries** runs a car ferry at 4pm on Saturday from Cork (Ringaskiddy) to Roscoff (14 hours) and at 9.30pm on Friday in the other direction. One-way, a car with two passengers costs €140 to €290 and carless foot

passengers pay €75 to €110, not including mandatory on-board accommodation (€95 to €125 for a two-bunk inside cabin).

Italy

Every two or three days during the warm half of the year, **SNCM** runs an overnight car ferry from Marseille to Porto Torres on the Italian island of Sardinia (Sardaigne). The crossing takes 14½ to 17½ hours.

Several ferry companies ply the waters between Corsica and Italy. For details, see p909.

North Africa

SNCM and **CTN** link Marseille (and sometimes Toulon) with the Tunisian capital, Tunis (21 hours, three or four a week) and, occasionally, Bizerte, Sfax and Sousse.

Every day or two, **SNCM** car ferries – or ferries bookable via SNCM – link Marseille (and sometimes Sète and Toulon) with five ports in Algeria: Algiers (Alger; 21 hours), Annaba, Béjaia, Oran and Skikda.

Two Moroccan companies, **Comanav** and **Comarit**, link Sète – 26km (20 minutes by train) southwest of Montpellier – with the Moroccan port of Tangier (Tanger; 22 hours, three or four times weekly). In France ticketing is handled by **SNCM** (☎ Sète office 04 67 46 68 00).

The UK

Like Eurotunnel, trans-Channel ferry companies have started setting fares the way budget airlines do: the longer in advance you book and the lower the demand for a particular sailing, the less you pay, with the cheapest tickets costing just a third of the priciest ones. Seasonal demand is a crucial factor (July and August are especially busy), as is the time of day (an early evening ferry can cost much more than one at 4am). On some routes, three- or five-day excursion (return) fares often cost about the same as regular one-way tickets, and same-day returns can be even cheaper (though conditions apply). Deals available in the UK may not be on offer in France, and vice versa.

To get the best fare by comparing prices on various trans-Channel options, check out the booking service offered by **Ferry Savers** (☎ in UK 0844-576 8835; www.ferrysavers.com). Booking by phone incurs a UK£25 fee.

If you pay the foot-passenger fare, transporting a bicycle is often (but not always) free.

Foot passengers are not allowed on Dover–Boulogne and Dover–Dunkirk crossings and at night on Dover–Calais sailings.

TO BRITTANY

Condor Ferries runs car ferries from Poole to St-Malo (from 4½ hours) almost daily from late May to September; and from Weymouth to St-Malo (5¼ hours) daily from late March to October and at least once a week in winter, with a change of boat in Jersey or Guernsey from late May to September.

Brittany Ferries links Plymouth with Roscoff (6½ hours by day, nine hours overnight, one to three daily from mid-March to early November, almost daily in winter); and Portsmouth with St-Malo (8¾ hours by day, 10¾ hours overnight, one daily from March to October, almost daily in winter).

TO FAR NORTHERN FRANCE

The extremely popular Dover–Calais crossing is handled by **SeaFrance** (80 to 90 minutes, 15 daily) and **P&O Ferries** (75 to 90 minutes, 35 daily). Foot passengers, who are not allowed on night sailings (ie sailings departing after sometime between 7pm and 9.30pm and before 7am or 8am), pay about UK£14 one-way on SeaFrance and UK£20 one-way on P&O (less if you reserve ahead). Car fares vary greatly – for a vehicle and up to nine passengers they can be as low as UK£25 or as high as UK£70. Promotional fares you can book on the internet may not be available at company offices.

Car ferries run by **Norfolk Line** link Loon Plage, about 25km west of Dunkirk (Dunkerque), with Dover (1¾ hours) for UK£19 to UK£93 one-way for a vehicle and up to four passengers. Cheap tickets are first come, first served. Foot passengers are not allowed.

Ultramodern, ultrafast, low-cost car catamarans run by **Speed Ferries** link Dover with Boulogne-sur-Mer (50 minutes, three to five daily). The one-way fare for a car with up to five passengers ranges from UK£18 to UK£67. Foot passengers and camping trailers cannot be accommodated but cyclists can. Has a straightforward, easy-to-use website.

TO NORMANDY

Transmanche Ferries operates year-round car ferries from Newhaven to Dieppe (up to three daily, four hours). A one-way foot-passenger fare starts at €19; the one-way fare for a car

and two adults usually ranges from UK£37.50 to UK£90.

Year-round, **LD Lines** offers a 5pm car ferry service (foot passengers welcome) from Portsmouth to Le Havre (5½ hours) and an overnight crossing (eight hours) in the opposite direction. One-way passage for a car and two adults generally costs UK£32.50 to UK£89.50. From May to mid-September, the company's ferries also link Newhaven with Le Havre (five hours).

Brittany Ferries links Cherbourg with both Poole (high-speed ferry 2¼ hours, regular ferry 4½ to 6½ hours, two or three daily) and Portsmouth (three hours, one or two sailings daily). The company also has car-ferry services from Portsmouth to Ouistreham (5¼ to seven hours, two to four daily), 14km northeast of Caen; high-speed ferries (3¾ hours) ply this route from mid-March to late October.

Condor Ferries links Portsmouth with Cherbourg (5½ hours) each Sunday from late May to early September.

The USA, Canada & Elsewhere

The days when you could earn your passage to Europe on a freighter are long gone, but it's still possible to travel as a passenger on a cargo ship from North America and East Asia to France's Atlantic Coast (eg Le Havre). Expect to pay from around US\$90 to US\$135 per day. Such vessels typically carry five to 12 passengers (more than 12 would require a doctor on board). Useful websites:

Freighter World Cruises (www.freighterworld.com)
Based in California.

The Cruise People (www.cruisepeople.co.uk) Based in London.

GETTING AROUND

This section provides details on travelling both by car – the simplest way to get around except in traffic-plagued, parking-starved city centres – and on the excellent public transport network, which covers every corner of the land except some rural areas. In addition to its environmental benefits, travelling by train, metro, tram and bus lets you experience France the way many ordinary French people do, taking in the sights, encountering the unexpected and meeting locals at a pace set by the leisurely rhythm of day-to-day life.

The state-owned Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français (SNCF) takes care of almost all land transport between *départements*. Transport within *départements* is handled by a combination of short-haul trains, SNCF buses and local bus companies that are either government-owned or government-contracted. All cities and towns have public transport systems.

Domestic air travel has been partly deregulated but smaller carriers still struggle.

AIR

All of France's major cities – as well as many minor ones – have airports, which we mention in the destination chapters.

Air France (☎ 36 54; www.airfrance.com) and its subsidiaries **Brit Air** (www.britair.fr) and **Régional** (☎ 36 54; www.regional.com) continue to control the lion's share of France's long-protected domestic airline industry. Significant discounts are available to people aged 12 to 24 (26 or under in the case of students) or over 60, and couples who are married or can prove they live together. You can save up to 84% if you buy your ticket well in advance (at least 42 days ahead for the best deals); stay over a Saturday night; and/or don't mind tickets that can't be changed or reimbursed. Special last-minute offers are posted on the Air France website every Wednesday.

Budget carriers offering flights within France include **easyJet** (www.easyjet.com), **Airlinair** (www.airlinair.com) and **Twin Jet** (www.twinjet.net).

Any French travel agency can make air bookings and supply details on fare options.

France's vaunted TGV (*Train à Grande Vitesse*, ie High-Speed Train) network, which has a minimal carbon footprint because it's powered by nuclear-generated electricity, has made rail travel between some cities (eg from Paris to Lyon and Marseille) faster and easier than flying.

BICYCLE

France is generally a great place to cycle. Not only is much of the countryside drop-dead gorgeous but it has a growing number of urban and rural *pistes cyclables* (bike paths and lanes), some linking one town to the next, and an extensive network of secondary and tertiary roads with relatively light traffic. One pitfall: back roads rarely have proper shoulders so wearing a fluorescent reflective vest is highly recommended.

French law dictates that bicycles must have two functioning brakes, a bell, a red reflector on the back, and yellow reflectors on the pedals. After sunset and when visibility is poor, cyclists must turn on a white light at the front and a red one at the rear. When being overtaken by a vehicle, cyclists are required to ride in single file. Towing children in a bike trailer is permitted.

Never leave your bicycle locked up outside overnight if you want to see it or most of its parts again. Some hotels can provide enclosed bicycle parking.

The **Fédération Française des Usagers de la Bicyclette** (French Bicycle Users Federation; www.fubicy.org, in French) promotes cycling for transport.

More information of interest to cyclists can be found on p943.

Transportation

The SNCF does its best to make travelling with a bicycle easy and even has a special website dealing with bikes and trains, www.velo.sncf.com (in French).

Bicycles, in their natural, rideable state (ie not disassembled), can be taken along as carry-on luggage on most long-distance intercity trains, subject to space availability – look for a bicycle pictogram on train schedules. There's no charge on Corail Intercité trains but TGV, TéoZ and Lunéa trains (see p975) require a €10 reservation that needs to be made when you purchase your passenger ticket (at the time of research, it was not possible to make bike reservations via the internet).

Bicycles that have been partly disassembled and put in a box (*housse*), with maximum dimensions of 1.20m by 90cm, can be taken along for no charge in the baggage compartments of TGV, TéoZ, Lunéa and Corail Intercité trains.

Bicycles can be brought along for no charge on all intraregional TER trains in Alsace, Aquitaine, Auvergne, Languedoc-Roussillon, Limousin, Provence-Côte d'Azur and Rhône-Alpes, subject to space availability. In other regions, check TER regional train schedules for a bicycle pictogram.

In the Paris area, bicycles are allowed aboard Transilien and RER trains except during rush hour periods from Monday to Friday (6.30am to 9am for trains heading into and around Paris, 4.30pm to 7pm for trains travelling around and out of the city).

With precious few exceptions, bicycles are not allowed on metros, trams and local, intra-*département* and SNCF buses (the latter replace trains on some runs).

On trans-Channel ferries, foot passengers can usually (but not always) bring along a bicycle for no charge. On Eurotunnel shuttle trains through the Channel Tunnel, the fee for a bicycle, including its rider, is UK£16 one-way. For details on taking your bike on an international train to France, see www.railpassenger.info.

European Bike Express (☎ in UK 01430-422 111; www.bike-express.co.uk) transports cyclists and their bikes from the UK to places around France.

Bike Rental

Most French cities and towns have at least one bike shop that rents out *vélos tout terrains* (mountain bikes; generally €10 to €20 a day), popularly known as VTTs; more road-oriented *vélos tout chemin* (VTCs); or cheaper city bikes. You usually have to leave ID and/or a deposit (often a credit-card slip) that you forfeit if the bike is damaged or stolen. Some cities, such as Strasbourg and La Rochelle, have inexpensive rental agencies run by the municipality, and in some places (eg Dijon) tourist offices rent out bicycles. For details on rental options, see Getting Around under city and town listings throughout this book.

A growing number of cities – most famously, Paris and Lyon, but also Rennes, La Rochelle, Orléans, Montpellier, Aix-en-Provence, Mulhouse, Besançon, Marseille, Nancy, Toulouse, Rouen, Amiens, Perpignan, Dijon, Caen, and Nantes – have automatic bike rental systems, intended to encourage cycling as a form of urban transport, with computerised pick-up and drop-off sites all over town. In general, you have to sign up either short-term or long-term, providing credit-card details, and can then use the bikes for no charge for the first half hour. For details on Paris' *Vélib'* system, see p201.

If you'll be doing lots of cycling but don't want to bring your bike from home, it may be worthwhile to buy a VTT (prices start at around €250) and resell it at the end of your trip for around two-thirds of its purchase price, something that's possible at certain bike shops. The website www.velo101.com (in French) has classified ads and advice.

BOAT

For information on ferry services that operate along France's coasts and to offshore islands, see individual town and city sections. For information on ferry services from other countries, see p965.

Canal Boating

Transportation and tranquillity are usually mutually exclusive – but not if you rent a houseboat and cruise along France's canals and navigable rivers, stopping at whim to pick up supplies, dine at a village restaurant or check out a local château by bicycle. Changes in altitude are taken care of by a system of *écluses* (locks).

Boats generally accommodate from two to 12 passengers and are fully outfitted with bedding and cooking facilities. Anyone over 18 can pilot a riverboat but first-time skippers are given a short instruction session so they qualify for a *carte de plaisance* (a temporary cruising permit). The speed limit is 6km/h on canals and 8km/h on rivers.

Prices start at around €450 a week for a small boat and can top €3000 for a large, luxurious craft. Except in July and August, you can often rent over a weekend (Friday to Monday; from €280) or from Monday to Friday.

Advance reservations are essential for holiday periods, over long weekends and in July and August, especially for larger boats.

Online rental agencies include **Canal Boat Holidays** (www.canalboatholidays.com), **Holidays** (Bargaining in France; www.bargaininginfrance.com) and **Worldwide River Cruise** (www.worldwide-river-cruise.com). For more rental companies, see the Burgundy chapter (p456) and the Limousin, the Dordogne & Quercy chapter (p607).

BUS

Buses are widely used for short-distance travel within *départements*, especially in rural areas with relatively few train lines (eg Brittany and Normandy). Unfortunately, services in some regions are infrequent and slow, in part because they were designed to get children to their schools in the towns rather than transport visitors around the countryside.

Over the years, certain uneconomical train lines have been replaced by SNCF buses, which – unlike regional buses – are free if you've got a rail pass.

Car Hire

To hire a car in France, you'll generally need to be over 21 years old, have had a driver's licence for at least a year, and have an international credit card. Drivers under 25 usually have to pay a surcharge (*frais jeune conducteur*) of €25 to €35 per day.

Car-rental companies provide mandatory third-party liability insurance but things such as collision-damage waivers (CDW, or *assurance tous risques*) vary greatly from company to company. When comparing rates and conditions (ie the fine print), the most important thing to check is the *franchise* (excess), which for a small car is usually around €600 for damage and €800 for theft. With many companies, you can reduce the excess to zero (or at least to half) by paying a daily insurance supplement of €10 to €16. Your credit card may cover CDW if you use it to pay for the car rental but the rental company won't know anything about this – verify conditions and details with your credit-card issuer to be sure.

Arranging your car rental or fly/drive package before you leave home is usually considerably cheaper than a walk-in rental but beware of website offers that don't include a CDW or you may be liable for up to 100% of the car's value.

Major rental companies include the following:

ADA (☎ 08 25 16 91 69; www.ada.fr, in French)

Avis (☎ 08 20 05 05 05; www.avis.com)

Budget (☎ 08 25 00 35 64; www.budget.com or www.budget.fr, in French)

Easycar (☎ in UK 0906-333 333 3; www.easycar.com)

Europcar (☎ 08 25 35 83 58; www.europcar.com)

Hertz (☎ 01 39 38 38 38; www.hertz.com)

National-Citer (www.nationalcar.com or www.citer.fr)

Renault Rent (☎ 08 10 40 50 60; www.renault-rent.com, in French) Renault's new car-rental arm.

Sixt (☎ 08 20 00 74 98; www.sixt.fr, in French)

Deals can be found on the internet, with travel agencies and through companies like **Auto Europe** (☎ in USA 1-888-223-5555; www.autoeurope.com) in the US, **DriveAway Holidays** (☎ in Australia 1300 723 972; www.driveaway.com.au) in Australia and **Holiday Autos** (☎ in UK 0871-472 5229; www.holidayautos.co.uk) in the UK. In this book, car-rental addresses are listed under large cities and towns.

Note that rental cars with automatic transmission are very much the exception

in France. You will usually need to order one well in advance, with a much smaller (and invariably costlier) range of models to choose from.

Hybrid-car hire is in its infancy but Hertz now has a few Toyota Prius available in France and, despite the higher rental rates, more companies are sure to follow suit. For more information, see www.greencarsite.co.uk/green-car-hire.htm.

For insurance reasons, you are usually not allowed to take rental cars on ferries, eg to Corsica.

All rental cars registered in France have a distinctive number on the licence plate, making them easily identifiable – including to thieves, so *never* leave anything of value in a parked car, even in the boot.

Driving Licence & Documents

All drivers must carry at all times: an EU national ID card or passport; a valid driver's licence (*permis de conduire*; most foreign licences can be used in France for up to a year); car-ownership papers, known as a *carte grise* (grey card); and proof of third-party liability *assurance* (insurance).

An International Driving Permit (IDP), valid only if accompanied by your original licence (an IDP is basically just a translation), is good for a year and can be issued by your local automobile association before you leave home.

Fuel & Spare Parts

Essence (petrol), also known as *carburant* (fuel), costs around €1.40/L for 95 unleaded (Sans Plomb 95 or SP95, usually available from a green pump) and €1.30 for diesel (*diesel, gazole* or *gasoil*, usually available from a yellow pump). Filling up (*faire le plein*) is most expensive at the rest stops along the autoroutes and often cheapest at hypermarkets.

Many small petrol stations close on Sunday afternoons, and, even in cities, it can be hard to find a staffed station open late at night. In general, after-hours purchases (eg at hypermarkets' 24-hour stations) can only be made with a credit card that has an embedded PIN chip, so if all you've got is cash or a magnetic-strip credit card, you could be stuck.

If your car is *en panne* (breaks down), you'll have to find a garage that handles your *marque* (make of car). Peugeot, Renault and Citroën garages are common, but if you have a

non-French car, you may have trouble finding someone to service it in more remote areas.

Insurance

Third-party liability insurance (*assurance au tiers*) is compulsory for all vehicles in France, including cars brought in from abroad. Normally, cars registered and insured in other European countries can circulate freely in France, but it's a good idea to contact your insurance company before you leave home to make sure you've got coverage – and to check who to contact in case of a breakdown or accident.

If you get into a minor accident with no injuries, the easiest way for drivers to sort things out with their insurance companies is to fill out a **Constat Amiable d'Accident Automobile** (European Accident Statement), a standardised way of recording important details about what happened. In rental cars it's usually in the packet of documents in the glove compartment. Make sure the report includes any information that will help you prove that the accident was not your fault. Remember, if it was your fault you may be liable for a hefty insurance excess. Don't sign anything you don't fully understand. If problems crop up, call the **police** (☎ 17).

French-registered cars have details on their insurance company printed on a little green square affixed to their windscreens (from inside the car, in the lower-right-hand corner).

Motorbike Hire

Motorcycle and moped rental is popular in southern France, especially in the beach resorts, but accidents are all too common. Where relevant, details on rental options appear at the end of city and town listings.

To rent a moped, scooter or motorcycle, you usually have to leave a large *caution* (deposit), which you then forfeit – up to the value of the damage – if you cause an accident or if the bike is damaged or stolen.

Parking

In city centres, most on-the-street parking places are *payant* (metered) from about 9am to 7pm (sometimes with a break from noon to 2pm) from Monday to Saturday, except bank holidays. Details on places near city centres where parking is free, and without the usual two-hour time limits, appear in the Getting Around section of many city listings.

Purchase-Repurchase Plans

If you'll be needing a car in France (or Europe) for one to six months (up to one year if you'll be studying or teaching in France), by far the cheapest option is to 'purchase' a brand-new one from **Citroën** (Eurocar TT, DriveEurope or Citroën TT; www.eurocartt.com, www.citroendriveeurope.com.au or www.citroentt.com), **Peugeot** (Open Europe or Sodexa; www.peugeot-openeurope.com) or **Renault** (Eurodrive; www.eurodrive.renault.com) and then 'sell' it back to them at the end of your trip. In reality, you pay only for the number of days you have the vehicle but the paperwork means that the car is registered under your name – and that the whole deal is exempt from all sorts of taxes. Eligibility is restricted to people who are not residents of the EU (citizens of EU countries are eligible if they live outside the EU). Pricing and special offers depend on your home country.

Prices include unlimited kilometres, 24-hour towing and breakdown service, and comprehensive insurance with – incredibly – no excess, so returning the car is totally hassle-free, even if it's damaged. Extending your contract is possible (using a credit card) but you'll end up paying about double the prepaid per-day rate.

Cars – which have special red licence plates – can be picked up at about three-dozen cities and airports all over France and dropped off at any other purchase-repurchase centre. You can also pick up or return your car in some cities outside France for a fee.

Road Rules

Enforcement of traffic laws has been stepped up in France in recent years and speed cameras are becoming ever more common.

French law requires that all passengers, including those in the back seat, wear seat belts. Babies weighing less than 13kg must travel in the rear in backward-facing child seats; children up to 18kg must ride in child seats. Children under 10 must sit in the back unless it's already occupied by other children under 10. North American drivers should remember that turning right on a red light is illegal in France.

Speed limits outside built-up areas:

- 90km/h (80km/h if it's raining) on undivided N and D highways
- 110km/h (100km/h if it's raining) on non-autoroute divided highways
- 130km/h (110km/h in the rain, 60km/h in icy conditions) on autoroutes

There is talk of reducing the autoroute speed limit in some areas, eg Alsace, to 110km/h to reduce fuel consumption, in light of climate change.

Unless otherwise posted, a limit of 50km/h applies in *all* areas designated as built up, no matter how rural they may appear. You must slow to 50km/h the moment you come to a white sign with a red border and a place name written on it; you can resume your previous speed when you pass an identical sign with a horizontal bar through it. You can be fined for going 10km over the speed limit.

Under the *priorité à droite* rule, any car entering an intersection (including a T-junction and a roundabout) from a road on your right has the right of way, unless the intersection is marked *vous n'avez pas la priorité* (you do not have right of way) or *cédez le passage* (give way). *Priorité à droite* is also suspended on priority roads, which are marked by an upended yellow square with a black square in the middle.

It is illegal to drive with a blood-alcohol concentration over 0.05% (0.5g per litre of blood) – the equivalent of two glasses of wine for a 75kg adult. Police often conduct breathalyser tests at random and penalties can be severe, including imprisonment. Mobile phones may only be used when accompanied by a hands-free kit or speakerphone.

Since July 2008, all French vehicles must now carry a reflective safety jacket and a reflective triangle; the fine for not carrying one/both is €90/135. Radar detectors are illegal.

Riders of any type of two-wheeled vehicle with a motor (except motor-assisted bicycles) must wear a helmet. No special licence is required to ride a motorbike whose engine is smaller than 50cc, which is why you often find places renting scooters rated at 49.9cc.

HITCHING

Hitching is never entirely safe in any country in the world, and we don't recommend it. Travellers who decide to hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk. Remember that it's safer to travel in pairs and be sure to inform someone of your intended destination. Hitching is not really part of French culture and is not recommended for women in France, even in pairs.

Hitching from city centres is pretty much hopeless, so your best bet is to take public

transport to the outskirts. It is illegal to hitch on autoroutes but you can stand near an entrance ramp as long as you don't block traffic. Remote rural areas are a better bet, but once you get off the *routes nationales* traffic can be light and local. If your itinerary includes a ferry crossing, it's worth trying to score a ride before the ferry since vehicle tickets sometimes include a number of passengers free of charge. At dusk, give up and think about finding somewhere to stay.

Ride Share

A number of organisations around France arrange *covoiturage* (car sharing), ie putting people looking for rides in touch with drivers going to the same destination. You generally pay a per-kilometre fee to the driver as well as a flat administration fee. The best known is Paris-based **Allostop** (☎ 01 53 20 42 42; www.allostop.net, in French; 30 rue Pierre Sénard, 9e, Paris), though you might also try www.123envoiture.com, www.covoiturage.com, www.carecole.com, www.carjob.org and www.carvoyage.com.

LOCAL TRANSPORT

France's cities and larger towns have excellent public-transport systems. There are *métros* (underground subway systems) in Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Lille and Toulouse and ultramodern light-rail lines (*tramways*) in cities such as Bordeaux, Grenoble, Lille, Lyon, Nancy, Nantes, Nice, Rouen and Strasbourg, as well as parts of Paris. Details on routes and fares are available at tourist offices and from local transport companies – see Getting Around under city and town listings.

See p943 and p969 for information on bicycles and bike hire.

Taxi

All medium and large train stations – and many small ones – have a taxi stand out front. For details on the tariffs and regulations applicable in major cities, see p204. In small cities and towns, where taxi drivers are unlikely to find another fare anywhere near where they let you off, one-way and return trips often cost the same. Tariffs are about 30% higher at night and on Sundays and holidays. Having a cab wait for you while you visit something costs about €18 an hour. There may be a surcharge to get picked up at a train station or airport and a small additional fee for a fourth passenger and/or for suitcases.

TOURS

Local tourist offices, museums, wineries, châteaux and private companies all over France offer a wide variety of guided walking, cycling and minibus tours with expert commentary. In chapter subsections and city listings, details appear either under Tours or under Activities.

The **Association of British Travel Organisers to France** (www.holidayfrance.org.uk) has an online list of UK-based companies offering trips to France – click ‘ABTOF Members’ under ‘Directory’.

A multitude of companies run activities-based tours, usually including accommodation, meals and transport.

ATG Oxford (www.atg-oxford.co.uk) Cycling and rambling holidays for independent travellers.

Butterfield & Robinson (www.butterfield.com) Canada-based upmarket walking and biking holidays.

CBT Tours (www.biketrip.net) Cycling tours are the speciality of this US-based outfit.

Classic Bike Provence (www.classicbikeprovence.com) Motorcycling tours in Provence and beyond astride classic bikes from the ‘50s to the ‘80s.

Cycling for Softies (www.cycling-for-softies.co.uk) Encouraging cycling trips through rural France.

French Wine Explorers (www.wine-tours-france.com) US-based outfit offering small-group wine tours.

Olde Ipswich Tours (www.ipswichtours.com) Specialist ‘gourmet’ tours (based in the USA).

Ramblers Worldwide Holidays (www.ramblers.holidays.co.uk) Tours based around walking, trekking and cross-country skiing.

TRAIN

Travelling by train is a comfortable, classy, urbane and environmentally sustainable way to see France. Since many train stations have car-rental agencies, it’s easy to combine rail travel with rural exploration by motorcar.

The jewel in the crown of France’s public transport system – alongside the Paris *métro* – is its extensive rail network, almost all run by the state-owned **SNCF** (☎ 36 35; www.sncf.com). Although it employs the most advanced rail technology, the network’s layout reflects the country’s centuries-old Paris-centric nature: most of the principal rail lines radiate out from Paris like the spokes of a wheel, the result being that services between provincial towns situated on different spurs can be infrequent and slow. For details, see the map on p966. Up-to-the-minute information on *perturbations* (service disruptions), eg because of strikes, can be found on www.infolignes.com (in French).

Since its inauguration in the 1980s, the pride and joy of SNCF – and the French – is the world-renowned **TGV** (Train à Grande Vitesse, ie ‘high-speed train’; www.tgv.com), pronounced *teh zheh veh*, which zips passengers along at speeds of up to 320km/h (198mph). In 2008, the French company Alstom unveiled the next generation TGV, known as the AGV (Automotrice Grande Vitesse), which will be able to travel up to 360km/h. Instead of having locomotives at each end, motors will be situated under each carriage. In 2007, a specially modified TGV achieved a new speed record for non-maglev (magnetic levitation) trains: 574.8km/h.

The four main TGV lines head due north, due east, southeast and southwest from Paris:

TGV Nord, Thalys & Eurostar These link Paris’ Gare du Nord with Arras, Lille, Calais, Brussels, Amsterdam, Cologne and, via the Channel Tunnel, Ashford, Ebbsfleet and London St Pancras.

TGV Est Européen Inaugurated in 2007, this new line connects Paris’ Gare de l’Est with Reims, Nancy, Metz, Strasbourg, Zurich and Germany, including Frankfurt and Stuttgart. At the time of research, super-high-speed track stretched only as far east as Lorraine but it’s supposed to reach Strasbourg in 2012.

TGV Sud-Est & TGV Midi-Méditerranée These lines link Paris’ Gare de Lyon with the southeast, including Dijon, Lyon, Geneva, the Alps, Avignon, Marseille, Nice and Montpellier.

TGV Atlantique Sud-Ouest & TGV Atlantique Ouest These link Paris’ Gare Montparnasse with western and southwestern France, including Brittany (Rennes, Brest, Quimper), Nantes, Tours, Poitiers, La Rochelle, Bordeaux, Biarritz and Toulouse.

TGV lines are interconnected, making it possible to go directly from, say, Lyon to Nantes or Bordeaux to Lille without switching trains in Paris – or, even worse, having to transfer from one of Paris’ six main train stations to another. Stops on the link-up, which runs east and south of Paris, include Roissy Charles de Gaulle airport and Disneyland Resort Paris. For details on international rail travel, see p964.

In an effort to make train travel both affordable and hip for the iPod generation, the SNCF has recently launched a new website, www.idtgv.com, which sells tickets for as little as €19 for TGV travel on 20 routes to/from Paris.

A train that is not a TGV is often referred to as a *corail*, a *classique* or a **TER** (Train Express

Régional; www.ter-sncf.com, in French). Certain non-TGV services have been given funny names:

Corail Intercités Medium-haul routes.

Lunéa (www.coraillunea.fr, in French) Overnight trains for cross-country travel, eg from Paris' Gare d'Austerlitz to Biarritz, Quimper to Lyon, or Strasbourg to Nice. Goes to the Alps in winter.

Téoz (www.corailteoz.com, in French) Especially comfortable trains that run southward from Paris' Gare d'Austerlitz to Clermont-Ferrand, Limoges, Cahors, Toulouse, Montpellier, Perpignan, Marseille and Nice.

Transilien (www.transilien.com) SNCF services in the Île de France (the Paris region).

For details on especially scenic train routes all around France, see www.trainstouristiques-ter.com.

Long-distance trains sometimes split at a station – that is, each half of the train heads off for a different destination. Check the destination panel on your car as you board or you could wind up very, very far from wherever it was you intended to go.

Classes & Sleeping Cars

Most French trains have both 1st- and 2nd-class sections. Full-fare tickets for the former cost 50% more than the latter.

On overnight trains, the 2nd-class *couchette* compartments have six berths while those in 1st class have four. Certain overnight trains have 1st-class *voitures-lits* (sleeping cars), which provide private facilities for one or two people and a continental breakfast. Some *couchette* compartments are reserved for women travelling alone or with children.

Costs

Full-fare tickets can be quite expensive – for instance, a one-way low-/peak-period trip by TGV from Paris to Lyon will drain your wallet of €61/79.50. Full-fare return passage costs twice as much as one-way fares. Children aged under four travel for free; those aged four to 11 pay half price. For details on discounts, see below.

SNCF DISCOUNTS

The SNCF's most heavily discounted tickets are, oddly, known as **Prem's**. They can be booked on the internet, by phone, at ticket windows and from ticket machines a maximum of 90 days and a minimum of four days before your travel date, though the very cheapest seats (eg Paris to Colmar for €22) often sell out early on. Once you buy a Prem's ticket, it's use it or lose it – getting your money back or changing the time is not allowed.

Corail fares that require neither a discount card nor advance purchase but get you 25% off include **Loisir Week-End** rates, good for return travel that includes a Saturday night at your destination or involves travel on a Saturday or Sunday; and **Découverte** fares, available for low-demand 'blue-period' trains to young people aged 12 to 25, seniors and the adult travel companions of children under 12. **Mini-Groupe** tickets can save lots for three to six people travelling together, provided you spend a Saturday night at your destination.

Reductions of at least 25% (for last-minute bookings), and up to 40%, 50% or even 60% (if you reserve ahead or travel during low-volume 'blue' periods), are available with several discount cards, valid for a year:

Carte 12-25 (www.12-25-sncf.com, in French; €49) Available to travellers aged 12 to 25.

Carte Enfant Plus (www.enfantplus-sncf.com, in French; €65) For one to four adults travelling with a child aged four to 11.

Carte Sénior (www.senior-sncf.com, in French; €55) For travellers over 60.

Carte Escapades (www.escapades-sncf.com, in French; €85) For people aged 26 to 59. Gets you discounts on return journeys of at least 200km that either include a Saturday night away or only involve travel on a Saturday or Sunday.

The new **Bons Plans** fares, a grab bag of really cheap options on a changing array of routes and dates, are advertised on www.voyages-sncf.com.

Certain French *régions* (eg Basse Normandie and Alsace) offer great deals on intraregional TER transport for day trips or weekend travel.

An **InterRail One Country Pass** (www.interrailnet.com) valid in France entitles nonresidents of France to unlimited travel on SNCF trains for three to eight days over the course of a month. For three/four/six/eight days, the cost is €189/209/269/299 for adults and €125/139/175/194 for young people aged 12 to 25.

LEFT-LUGGAGE FACILITIES

Because of security concerns, French train stations no longer have left-luggage lockers, but in some larger stations you can leave your bags in a *consigne manuelle* (staffed left-luggage facility), where items are handed over in person and x-rayed before being stowed. To find out which stations let you leave your bags and when their *consignes* are open, go to www.gares-en-mouvement.com (in French), choose a city, click 'Infos Pratiques' and then 'Services'.

Ticket prices for some trains, including most TGVs, reflect supply and demand and so are pricier during peak periods, eg during workday rush hours, on Friday evening and at the beginning and end of holiday periods.

Pooches (and other pets) under 6kg travel for free as long as they're in a pouch. Dogs that weigh more than that – except guide dogs – need a ticket, available for 50% of a standard fare.

Tickets & Reservations

Large stations often have separate ticket windows for *internationale*, *grandes lignes* (long-haul) and *banlieue* (suburban) lines, and for people whose train is about to leave (*départ immédiat* or *départ dans l'heure*). Nearly every SNCF station has at least one *borne libre-service* (self-service terminal) or *billetterie automatique* (automatic ticket machine) that accepts both cash and computer-chip credit cards. Push on the Union Jack for instructions in English.

Using a credit card, you can buy a ticket by phone or via the SNCF's internet booking site (www.voyages-sncf.com, in French)

and either have it sent to you by post (if you have an address in France) or collect it from any SNCF ticket office or from train-station ticket machines.

Before boarding the train, you must validate (*composter*) your ticket by time-stamping it in a *composteur*, one of those yellow posts located on the way to the platform. If you forget (or don't have a ticket for some other reason), find a conductor on the train before they find you – otherwise you can be fined.

In general, reserving a place on a specific train – something you can do by phone, on the internet or at stations – is optional, although there are exceptions:

- travel by TGV, Eurostar, Thalys, Lunéa or Téo
- couchettes (sleeping berths; €18 for 2nd class)
- travelling during peak holiday periods

For trains that do not require reservations (eg Corail Intercités and TER trains), full-fare tickets are useable whenever you like for 61 days from the date they were purchased. Like all SNCF tickets, they cannot be replaced if lost or stolen.

If you've got a full-fare Loisir Week-End ticket, you can change your reservation by phone, internet or at train stations for no charge until the day before your departure; changes made on the day of your reserved trip incur a charge of €10 (€3 for tickets bought with a discount card). Pro tickets (eg TGV Pro, Téo Pro) cost extra and allow full reimbursement up to the time of departure and, if you're running a bit late, let you board the next train to the same destination up to an hour after your scheduled departure. Very cheap promotional tickets (eg Prem's) cannot be modified and are nonreimbursable.

Health

CONTENTS

Before You Go	978
Insurance	978
Recommended Vaccinations	978
In Transit	978
Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)	978
Jet Lag	978
In France	979
Availability & Cost of Health Care	979
Diarrhoea	979
Environmental Hazards	979
Sexual Health	979
Travelling with Children	980
Women's Health	980

France is a healthy place so your main risks are likely to be sunburn, foot blisters, insect bites and mild stomach problems from eating and drinking with too much gusto.

BEFORE YOU GO

Prevention is the key to staying healthy while abroad. A little planning before departure, particularly for pre-existing illnesses, will save trouble later. See your dentist before a long trip, carry a spare pair of contact lenses and glasses, and take your optical prescription with you. Bring medications in their original, clearly labelled, containers. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications, including generic names (French medicine names are often completely different than those in other countries), is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

INSURANCE

Citizens of the EU, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway or Liechtenstein receive free or reduced-cost state-provided health-care cover with the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) for medical treatment that becomes necessary while in France. (The EHIC replaced the E111 in 2006.) Each family member will

need a separate card. In the UK, get application forms from post offices, or download them from the Department of Health website (www.dh.gov.uk), which has comprehensive information about the card's coverage.

Citizens from other countries will need to check if there is a reciprocal arrangement for free medical care between their country and France. If you need health insurance, strongly consider a policy covering the worst possible scenario, such as an accident requiring an emergency flight home. Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

No vaccinations are required to travel to France. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that all travellers be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio, regardless of their destination.

IN TRANSIT

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Blood clots may form in the legs during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility. The main symptom of DVT is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle or calf, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs it may cause chest pain and breathing difficulties. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent the development of DVT on long flights, walk about the cabin, contract the leg muscles while sitting, drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol and tobacco.

JET LAG

To avoid jet lag (common when crossing more than five time zones), drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids and eat light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep and so on) as soon as possible.

IN FRANCE

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Visitors to France can get excellent health care from the emergency room/casualty ward (*salle des urgences*) of a hospital (*hôpital*) and at a doctors' office (*cabinet médical*), and for minor illnesses trained staff in pharmacies – flagged in every village and town with a green-cross sign outside that flashes when open – give valuable advice and sell medications.

They can also tell you when more specialised help is needed and point you in the right direction. Dental care is usually good; however, it is sensible to have a dental check-up before a long trip.

DIARRHOEA

If you develop diarrhoea, drink plenty of fluids, preferably an oral rehydration solution (eg Dioralyte). If diarrhoea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours, or is accompanied by fever, shaking, chills or severe abdominal pain, seek immediate medical attention.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Altitude Sickness

Lack of oxygen at high altitudes (over 2500m) affects most people to some extent. Symptoms of Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) usually develop in the first 24 hours at altitude but may be delayed up to three weeks. Mild symptoms are headache, lethargy, dizziness, difficulty sleeping and loss of appetite. Severe symptoms are breathlessness, a dry, irritative cough (followed by the production of pink, frothy sputum), severe headache, lack of coordination and balance, confusion, vomiting, irrational behaviour, drowsiness and unconsciousness. There's no rule as to what is too high: AMS can be fatal at 3000m, but 3500m to 4500m is the usual range.

Treat mild symptoms by resting at the same altitude until you recover, which usually takes a day or two. Paracetamol (acetaminophen) or aspirin can be taken for headaches. If symptoms persist or grow worse, however, *immediate descent is necessary*; even 500m can help. Drug treatments should never be used to avoid descent or to enable further ascent. Diamox (acetazolamide) reduces the

headache of AMS and helps the body acclimatise to the lack of oxygen. It is only available on prescription.

To prevent AMS:

- Ascend slowly – have frequent rest days, spending two to three nights at each rise of 1000m. Acclimatisation takes place gradually.
- Sleep at a lower altitude than the greatest height reached during the day, if possible. Also, once above 3000m, care should be taken not to increase the sleeping altitude by more than 300m per day.
- Drink extra fluids. Monitor hydration by ensuring that urine is clear and plentiful.
- Eat light, high-carbohydrate meals for more energy.
- Avoid alcohol, sedatives and tobacco.

Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion follows excessive fluid loss with inadequate replacement of fluids and salt. Symptoms include headache, dizziness and tiredness. Dehydration is already happening by the time you feel thirsty – aim to drink enough water to produce pale, diluted urine. To treat heat exhaustion, replace lost fluids by drinking water and/or fruit juice, and cool the body with cold water and fans.

Hypothermia

Even on a hot day France's mountain weather can change rapidly so always carry waterproof garments and warm layers, and inform others of your route. Acute hypothermia follows a sudden drop of body temperature over a short time, while chronic hypothermia is caused by a gradual loss of body temperature over hours.

Hypothermia starts with shivering, loss of judgment and clumsiness. Unless rewarming occurs, the sufferer deteriorates into apathy, confusion and coma. Prevent further heat loss by seeking shelter, warm dry clothing, hot sweet drinks and shared bodily warmth.

SEXUAL HEALTH

Emergency contraception is available with a doctor's prescription in France. Condoms (*les préservatifs*) are readily available. Be sure to keep them in a cool dry place or they may crack.

It is estimated that 0.4% of France's adult population (aged 15 to 49) is living with HIV/AIDS (in French: *VIH/SIDA*).

TRAVELLING WITH CHILDREN

All travellers with children should know how to treat minor ailments and when to seek medical advice. Be sure children are up to date with routine vaccinations, and discuss possible travel vaccines well before departure, as some vaccines are not suitable for children under a year.

If your child has vomiting or diarrhoea, lost fluids and salts must be replaced. It may be helpful to take along rehydration powders for reconstituting with boiled water.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Emotional stress, exhaustion and travelling across time zones can all contribute to an upset in the menstrual pattern. If using oral contraceptives, remember some antibiotics, diarrhoea and vomiting can stop the pill from working and lead to the risk of pregnancy – remember to take condoms with you just in case. Time zones, gastrointestinal upsets and antibiotics do not affect injectable contraception.

Travelling during pregnancy is usually possible but you should always consult your doctor before planning your trip. The most risky times for travel are during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and after 30 weeks.

Language

CONTENTS

Pronunciation	981
Be Polite!	981
Gender	982
Accommodation	982
Conversation & Essentials	982
Directions	983
Emergencies	983
Health	983
Language Difficulties	984
Numbers	984
Paperwork	984
Question Words	984
Shopping & Services	984
Time & Dates	985
Transport	985
Travel with Children	986

Modern French developed from the *langue d'oïl*, a group of dialects spoken north of the Loire River that grew out of the vernacular Latin used during the late Gallo-Roman period. The *langue d'oïl* – particularly the Francien dialect spoken in the Île de France – eventually displaced the *langue d'oc*, the dialect spoken in the south of the country and from which the Mediterranean region of Languedoc got its name.

Standard French is taught and spoken throughout France, but its various accents and dialects are an important source of identity in certain regions. In addition, some of the peoples subjected to French rule many centuries ago have preserved their traditional languages. These include Dutch (known locally as Flemish) in the far north; Alsatian (a German dialect) in Alsace; Breton (a Celtic tongue akin to Welsh) in Brittany; Basque (a language unrelated to any other) in the Basque Country; Catalan in Roussillon (Catalan is the official language of nearby Andorra as well as the first language of many in the Spanish province of Catalonia); Provençal (an Occitan dialect) in Provence; and Corsican (linked to archaic Latin-Italian forms) on Corsica.

For more language about food and dining in France, see p87. If you'd like a more

comprehensive guide to the French language, Lonely Planet's *French Phrasebook* will cover most of your travel needs.

PRONUNCIATION

The pronunciation guides included with each French phrase should help in getting your message across. Here are a few letters of written French that may cause confusion:

- c** before **e** and **i**, as the 's' in 'sit'; before **a**, **o** and **u** it's pronounced as English 'k'. When carrying a 'cedilla' (ç), it's always pronounced as the 's' in 'sit'.
- j** **zh** in the pronunciation guides; as the 's' in 'leisure', eg *jour*, *zhoor* (day)
- n, m** where a syllable ends in a single **n** or **m**, these letters are not pronounced, but the preceding vowel is given a nasal pronunciation
- r** pronounced from the back of the throat while constricting the muscles to restrict the flow of air

BE POLITE!

You'll find any attempt to communicate in French will be much appreciated. What is often perceived as arrogance can be just a subtle objection to the assumption by many travellers that they should be able to speak English anywhere, in any situation, and be understood. You can easily avoid the problem by approaching people and addressing them in French. Even if the only sentence you can put together is *Pardon, madame/monsieur, parlez-vous anglais?* (Excuse me, madam/sir, do you speak English?), you're sure to be more warmly received than if you stick to English.

An important distinction is made in French between *tu* and *vous*, which both mean 'you'. *Tu* is only used when addressing people you know well, children or animals. If you're addressing an adult who isn't a personal friend, *vous* should be used unless the person invites you to use *tu*. In general, younger people insist less on this distinction between polite and informal, and you will find that in many cases they use *tu* from the beginning of an acquaintance.

GENDER

All nouns in French are either masculine or feminine and adjectives reflect the gender of the noun they modify. The feminine form of many nouns and adjectives is indicated by a silent **e** added to the masculine form, as in *ami* and *amie* (the masculine and feminine for 'friend').

In the following phrases, both masculine and feminine forms have been indicated where necessary. The masculine form comes first and is separated from the feminine by a slash. The gender of a noun is often indicated by a preceding article: 'the/a/some', *le/un/du* (m), *la/une/de la* (f); or one of the possessive adjectives, 'my/your/his, her', *mon/ton/son* (m), *ma/ta/sa* (f). In French, unlike English, the possessive adjective agrees in number and gender with the thing in question – eg 'his/her mother', *sa mère*.

ACCOMMODATION

I'm looking for *Je cherche ...* zher shersh ...

a ...

campsite	<i>un camping</i>	un kom-peeng
guest house	<i>une pension (de famille)</i>	ewn pon-syon (der fa-mee-yer)
hotel	<i>un hôtel</i>	un o-tel
youth hostel	<i>une auberge de jeunesse</i>	ewn o-berzh der zher-nes

Where can I find a cheap hotel?

Où est-ce qu'on peut trouver un hôtel pas cher?

oo es-kon per troo-vay un o-tel pa shair

What is the address?

Quelle est l'adresse?

kel ay la-dres

Could you write the address, please?

Est-ce que vous pourriez écrire l'adresse, s'il vous plaît?

es-ker voo poo-ryay ay-kreer la-dres seel voo play

Do you have any rooms available?

Est-ce que vous avez des chambres libres?

es-ker voo-za-vay day shom-brer lee-brer

I'd like (a) ... *Je voudrais ...* zher voo-dray ...

single room	<i>une chambre à un lit</i>	ewn shom-brer a un lee
double-bed room	<i>une chambre avec un grand lit</i>	ewn shom-brer a-vek un gron lee
twin room (with two beds)	<i>une chambre avec des lits jumeaux</i>	ewn shom-brer a-vek day lee zhe-w-mo

room with a bathroom	<i>une chambre avec une salle de bains</i>	ewn shom-brer a-vek ewn sal der bun
to share a dorm	<i>coucher dans un dortoir</i>	koo-shay don zun dor-twa

How much is it ...? *Quel est le prix ...?* kel ay ler pree ...

per night	<i>par nuit</i>	par nwee
per person	<i>par personne</i>	par per-son

May I see it?

Est-ce que je peux voir la chambre? es-ker zher per vwa la shom-brer

Where is the bathroom?

Où est la salle de bains? oo ay la sal der bun

Where is the toilet?

Où sont les toilettes? oo-son lay twa-let

I'm leaving today.

Je pars aujourd'hui. zher par o-zhoor-dwee

We're leaving today.

Nous partons aujourd'hui. noo par-ton o-zhoor-dwee

MAKING A RESERVATION

(for phone or written requests)

To ...	<i>À l'attention de ...</i>
From ...	<i>De la part de ...</i>
Date	<i>Date</i>
I'd like to book ...	<i>Je voudrais réserver ...</i>
in the name of ...	<i>au nom de ...</i>
from ... to ... (date)	<i>du ... au ...</i>

credit card number	<i>carte de crédit numéro</i>
expiry date	<i>date d'expiration</i>

Please confirm availability and price. *Veillez confirmer la disponibilité et le prix.*

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

Hello.	<i>Bonjour.</i>	bon-zhoor
Goodbye.	<i>Au revoir.</i>	o-rer-vwa
Yes.	<i>Oui.</i>	wee
No.	<i>Non.</i>	non
Please.	<i>S'il vous plaît.</i>	seel voo play
Thank you.	<i>Merci.</i>	mair-see

You're welcome.

Je vous en prie. (pol) zher voo-zon pree
De rien. (inf) der ree-en

Excuse me.*Excusez-moi.* ek-skew-zay-mwa**Sorry.** (forgive me)*Pardon.* par-don**What's your name?***Comment vous appelez-vous?* (pol) ko-mon voo-za-play voo*Comment tu t'appelles?* (inf) ko-mon tew-ta-pel**My name is ...***Je m'appelle ...* zher ma-pel ...**Where are you from?***De quel pays êtes-vous?* (pol) der kel pay-ee et-voo*De quel pays es-tu?* (inf) der kel pay-ee ay-tew**I'm from ...** *Je viens de ...* zher vyen der ...**I like ...** *J'aime ...* zhem ...**I don't like ...** *Je n'aime pas ...* zher nem pa ...**Just a minute.** *Une minute.* ewn mee-newt**SIGNS**

Entrée	Entrance
Sortie	Exit
Renseignements	Information
Ouvert	Open
Fermé	Closed
Interdit	Prohibited
Chambres Libres	Rooms Available
Complet	Full/No Vacancies
Commissariat de Police	Police Station
Toilettes/WC	Toilets
Hommes	Men
Femmes	Women

DIRECTIONS**Where is ...?***Où est ...?* oo ay ...**Go straight ahead.***Continuez tout droit.* kon-teen-way too drwa**Turn left.***Tournez à gauche.* too-nay a gosh**Turn right.***Tournez à droite.* too-nay a drwat**at the corner/at the traffic lights***au coin/aux feux* o kwun/o fer

behind	<i>derrière</i>	dair-ryair
in front of	<i>devant</i>	der-von
far (from)	<i>loin (de)</i>	lwun (der)
near (to)	<i>près (de)</i>	pray (der)
opposite	<i>en face de</i>	on fas der

EMERGENCIES**Help!***Au secours!* o skoor**There's been an accident!***Il y a eu un accident!* eel ya ew un ak-see-don**I'm lost.***Je me suis égaré/e.* (m/f) zhe me swee-zay-ga-raj**Leave me alone!***Fichez-moi la paix!* fee-shay-mwa la pay**Call ...!**

a doctor	<i>Appelez ...!</i> <i>un médecin</i>	a-play ... un mayd-sun
the police	<i>la police</i>	la po-lees

beach	<i>la plage</i>	la plazh
bridge	<i>le pont</i>	ler pon
castle	<i>le château</i>	ler sha-to
cathedral	<i>la cathédrale</i>	la ka-tay-dral
church	<i>l'église</i>	lay-gleez
island	<i>l'île</i>	leel
lake	<i>le lac</i>	ler lak
main square	<i>la place centrale</i>	la plas son-tral
museum	<i>le musée</i>	ler mew-zay
old city (town)	<i>la vieille ville</i>	la vyay veel
palace	<i>le palais</i>	ler pa-lay
quay	<i>le quai</i>	ler kay
river bank	<i>la rive</i>	la reev
ruins	<i>les ruines</i>	lay reevn
sea	<i>la mer</i>	la mair
square	<i>la place</i>	la plas
tourist office	<i>l'office de tourisme</i>	lo-fees der too-rees-mer
tower	<i>la tour</i>	la toor

HEALTH**I'm ill.***Je suis malade.* zher swee ma-lad
Il me fait mal. zhay ewn doo-ler
ici. ee-see**I'm ...***Je suis ...* zher swee(z) ...
asthmatique as-ma-teek
diabétique dee-a-bay-teek
épileptique ay-pee-lep-teek**I'm allergic***Je suis allergique ...* zher swee
aux antibio- za-lair-zheek ...
tiques o zon-tee-byo-teek*aux abeilles* o za-bay-raj
aux noix o nwa
aux cacahuètes o ka-ka-wet
à la pénicilline a la pay-nee-see-leen

antiseptic	<i>l'antiseptique</i>	lon-tee-sep-teek
aspirin	<i>l'aspirine</i>	las-pee-reen
condoms	<i>des préservatifs</i>	day pray-zair-va-teef
contraceptive	<i>le contraceptif</i>	ler kon-tra-sep-teef
diarrhoea	<i>la diarrhée</i>	la dya-ray
medicine	<i>le médicament</i>	ler may-dee-ka-mon
nausea	<i>la nausée</i>	la no-zay
sunblock cream	<i>la crème solaire</i>	la krem so-lair
tampons	<i>des tampons</i>	day tom-pou
	<i>hygiéniques</i>	ee-zhen-eek

30	<i>trente</i>	tront
40	<i>quarante</i>	ka-ront
50	<i>cinquante</i>	sung-kont
60	<i>soixante</i>	swa-son
70	<i>soixante-dix</i>	swa-son-dees
80	<i>quatre-vingts</i>	ka-trer-vung
90	<i>quatre-vingt-dix</i>	ka-trer-vung-dees
100	<i>cent</i>	son
1000	<i>mille</i>	meel

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

Do you speak English?

Parlez-vous anglais? par-lay-voov ong-glai

Does anyone here speak English?

Y a-t-il quelqu'un qui parle anglais? ya-teel kel-kung kee parl ong-glai

How do you say ... in French?

Comment est-ce qu'on dit ... en français? ko-mon es-kon dee ... on fron-say

What does ... mean?

Que veut dire ...? ker ver deer ...

I don't understand.

Je ne comprends pas. zher ner kom-pron pa

Could you write it down, please?

Est-ce que vous pourriez l'écrire, s'il vous plaît? es-ker voo poo-ryay lay-kreer seel voo play

Can you show me (on the map)?

Pouvez-vous m'indiquer (sur la carte)? poo-vay-voov mun-dee-kay (sewr la kart)

NUMBERS

0	<i>zéro</i>	zay-ro
1	<i>un</i>	un
2	<i>deux</i>	der
3	<i>trois</i>	trwa
4	<i>quatre</i>	ka-trer
5	<i>cinq</i>	sungk
6	<i>six</i>	sees
7	<i>sept</i>	set
8	<i>huit</i>	weet
9	<i>neuf</i>	nerf
10	<i>dix</i>	dees
11	<i>onze</i>	onz
12	<i>douze</i>	dooz
13	<i>treize</i>	trez
14	<i>quatorze</i>	ka-torz
15	<i>quinze</i>	kunz
16	<i>seize</i>	sez
17	<i>dix-sept</i>	dee-set
18	<i>dix-huit</i>	dee-zweet
19	<i>dix-neuf</i>	deez-nerf
20	<i>vingt</i>	vung
21	<i>vingt et un</i>	vung tay un
22	<i>vingt-deux</i>	vung-der

PAPERWORK

name	<i>nom</i>	nom
nationality	<i>nationalité</i>	na-syo-na-lee-tay
date/place of birth	<i>date/place de naissance</i>	dat/plas der nay-sons
sex/gender	<i>sexe</i>	seks
passport	<i>passeport</i>	pas-por
visa	<i>visa</i>	vee-za

QUESTION WORDS

Who?	<i>Qui?</i>	kee
What?	<i>Quoi?</i>	kwa
What is it?	<i>Qu'est-ce que c'est?</i>	kes-ker say
When?	<i>Quand?</i>	kon
Where?	<i>Où?</i>	oo
Which?	<i>Quel/Quelle? (m/f)</i>	kel
Why?	<i>Pourquoi?</i>	poor-kwa
How?	<i>Comment?</i>	ko-mon

SHOPPING & SERVICES

I'd like to buy ...

Je voudrais acheter ... zher voo-dray ash-tay ...

How much is it?

C'est combien? say kom-byun

I don't like it.

Cela ne me plaît pas. ser-la ner mer play pa

May I look at it?

Est-ce que je peux le voir? es-ker zher per ler vwar

I'm just looking.

Je regarde. zher rer-gard

It's cheap.

Ce n'est pas cher. ser nay pa shair

It's too expensive.

C'est trop cher. say tro shair

It'll take it.

Je le prends. zher ler pron

Can I pay by ...?

Est-ce que je peux payer avec ...? es-ker zher per pay-yay a-vek ...

credit card

ma carte de crédit ma kart der kray-dee

travellers cheques

des chèques de voyage day shek der vwa-yazh

more	<i>plus</i>	plew
less	<i>moins</i>	mwun
smaller	<i>plus petit</i>	plew per-tee
bigger	<i>plus grand</i>	plew gron
I'm looking for ...	<i>Je cherche ...</i>	zhe shersh ...
a bank	<i>une banque</i>	ewn bonk
the ...	<i>l'ambassade</i>	lam-ba-sahd
embassy	<i>de ...</i>	der ...
the hospital	<i>l'hôpital</i>	lo-pee-tal
an internet café	<i>un cybercafé</i>	un see-bair-ka-fay
the market	<i>le marché</i>	ler mar-shay
the police	<i>la police</i>	la po-lees
the post office	<i>le bureau de poste</i>	ler bew-ro der post
a public phone	<i>une cabine téléphonique</i>	ewn ka-been tay-lay-fo-neek
a public toilet	<i>les toilettes</i>	lay twa-let

TIME & DATES

What time is it?	<i>Quelle heure est-il?</i>	kel er ay til
It's (8) o'clock.	<i>Il est (huit) heures.</i>	il ay (weet) er
It's half past ...	<i>Il est (...) heures et demie.</i>	il ay (...) er ay day-mee
in the morning	<i>du matin</i>	dew ma-tun
in the afternoon	<i>de l'après-midi</i>	der la-pray-mee-dee
in the evening	<i>du soir</i>	dew swar
today	<i>aujourd'hui</i>	o-zhoor-dwee
tomorrow	<i>demain</i>	der-mun
yesterday	<i>hier</i>	yair

Monday	<i>lundi</i>	lun-dee
Tuesday	<i>mardi</i>	mar-dee
Wednesday	<i>mercredi</i>	mair-krer-dee
Thursday	<i>jeudi</i>	zher-dee
Friday	<i>vendredi</i>	von-drer-dee
Saturday	<i>samedi</i>	sam-dee
Sunday	<i>dimanche</i>	dee-monsh

January	<i>janvier</i>	zhon-vyay
February	<i>février</i>	fayv-ryay
March	<i>mars</i>	mars
April	<i>avril</i>	a-vreel
May	<i>mai</i>	may
June	<i>juin</i>	zhwun
July	<i>juillet</i>	zhwee-yay
August	<i>août</i>	oot
September	<i>septembre</i>	sep-tom-brer
October	<i>octobre</i>	ok-to-brer
November	<i>novembre</i>	no-vom-brer
December	<i>décembre</i>	day-som-brer

TRANSPORT

Public Transport		
What time does ... leave/arrive?	<i>À quelle heure part/arrive ...?</i>	a kel er par/a-reev ...
boat	<i>le bateau</i>	ler ba-to
bus	<i>le bus</i>	ler bews
plane	<i>l'avion</i>	la-vyon
train	<i>le train</i>	ler trun
I'd like a ... ticket.	<i>Je voudrais un billet ...</i>	zher voo-dray un bee-yay ...
one-way return	<i>simple aller et retour</i>	sum-pler a-lay ay rer-toor
1st-class	<i>de première classe</i>	der prem-yair klas
2nd-class	<i>de deuxième classe</i>	der der-zyem klas

I want to go to ...
Je voudrais aller à ... zher voo-dray a-lay a ...

The train has been delayed.
Le train est en retard. ler trun ay ton rer-tar

The train has been cancelled.
Le train a été annulé. ler trun a ay-tay a-new-lay

the first	<i>le premier (m) la première (f)</i>	ler prer-myay la prer-myair
the last	<i>le dernier (m) la dernière (f)</i>	ler dair-nyay la dair-nyair
platform number	<i>le numéro de quai</i>	ler new-may-ro der kay
ticket office	<i>le guichet</i>	ler gee-shay
timetable	<i>l'horaire</i>	lo-rair
train station	<i>la gare</i>	la gar

Private Transport

I'd like to hire a/an...	<i>Je voudrais louer ...</i>	zher voo-dray loo-way ...
car	<i>une voiture</i>	ewn vwa-tewr
4WD	<i>un quatre-quatre</i>	un kat-kat
motorbike	<i>une moto</i>	ewn mo-to
bicycle	<i>un vélo</i>	un vay-lo

Is this the road to ...?
C'est la route pour ...? say la root poor ...

Where's a service station?
Où est-ce qu'il y a une station-service? oo es-keel ya ewn sta-syon-ser-vees

Please fill it up.
Le plein, s'il vous plaît. ler plun seel voo play

I'd like ... litres.
Je voudrais ... litres. zher voo-dray ... lee-trer

petrol/gas	<i>essence</i>	ay-sons
diesel	<i>diesel</i>	dyay-zel

ROAD SIGNS

Cédez la Priorité	Give Way
Danger	Danger
Défense de Stationner	No Parking
Entrée	Entrance
Interdiction de Doubler	No Overtaking
Péage	Toll
Ralentissez	Slow Down
Sens Interdit	No Entry
Sens Unique	One Way
Sortie	Exit

(How long) Can I park here?

(Combien de temps) Est-ce que je peux stationner ici?
 (kom-byun der tom) es-ker zher per sta-syo-nay ee-see?

Where do I pay?

Où est-ce que je paie?
 oo es-ker zher pay?

I need a mechanic.

J'ai besoin d'un mécanicien.
 zhay ber-zwun dun may-ka-nee-syun

The car/motorbike has broken down (at ...).

La voiture/moto est tombée en panne (à ...).
 la vva-tewr/mo-to ay tom-bay on pan (a ...).

The car/motorbike won't start.

La voiture/moto ne veut pas démarrer.
 la vva-tewr/mo-to ner ver pa day-ma-ray

I have a flat tyre.

Mon pneu est à plat.
 mom pner ay ta pla

I've run out of petrol.

Je suis en panne d'essence.
 zher swee zon pan day-sons

I've had an accident.

J'ai eu un accident.
 zhay ew un ak-see-don

TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN

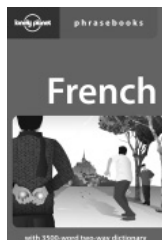
Is there a/an ...?	<i>Y a-t-il ...?</i>	ya teel ...
I need a/an ...	<i>J'ai besoin ...</i>	zhay ber-zwun ...
baby change room	<i>d'un endroit pour changer le bébé</i>	dun on-drwa poor shon-zhay ler bay-bay
car baby seat	<i>d'un siège-enfant</i>	dun syezh-on-fon
children's menu	<i>d'un menu pour enfants</i>	dun mer-new poor on-fon
disposable nappies/diapers	<i>de couches-culottes</i>	der koosh-kew-lot
formula (milk)	<i>de lait maternisé</i>	de lay ma-ter-nee-zay
(English-speaking) babysitter	<i>d'une baby-sitter (qui parle anglais)</i>	dewn ba-bee-see-ter (kee parl ong-glay)
highchair	<i>d'une chaise haute</i>	dewn shay zot
potty	<i>d'un pot de bébé</i>	dun po der bay-bay

Do you mind if I breastfeed here?

Cela vous dérange si j'allaité mon bébé ici?
 ser-la voo day-ron-zhe see zha-layt mon bay-bay ee-see

Are children allowed?

Les enfants sont permis? lay zon-fon son pair-mee



Also available from Lonely Planet:
French Phrasebook

Glossary

For a glossary of food and drink terms, see the Food & Drink chapter (p77).

(m) indicates masculine gender, (f) feminine gender and (pl) plural

accès – (track) access

accueil (m) – reception

alignements (m pl) – a series of standing stones, or menhirs, in straight lines

alimentation (f) – grocery store

AOC – Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée; system of French wine classification

arrondissement (m) – administrative division within a large city; abbreviated on signs as 1er (1st arrondissement), 2e (2nd), 3e (3rd) etc

atelier (m) – workshop or studio

auberge (m) – inn

auberge de jeunesse (f) – youth hostel

baie (f) – bay

bassin (m) – bay or basin

bastide (f) – medieval settlement in southwestern France, usually built on a grid plan and surrounding an arcaded square; also a country house in Provence

belle époque (f) – literally 'beautiful age'; era of elegance and gaiety characterising fashionable Parisian life in the period preceding WWI

billet (m) – ticket

billet jumelé (m) – combination ticket, good for more than one site, museum etc

billetterie (f) – ticket office or counter

bouchon – Lyonnais bistro

boulangerie (f) – bakery or bread shop

boules (f pl) – a game not unlike lawn bowls played with heavy metal balls on a sandy pitch; also called *pétanque*

BP – *boîte postale*; post office box

brasserie (f) – restaurant usually serving food all day (original meaning: brewery)

bureau de change (m) – exchange bureau

bureau de poste (m) or **poste** (f) – post office

CAF – Club Alpin Français

carnet (m) – a book of five or 10 bus, tram or metro tickets sold at a reduced rate

carrefour (m) – crossroad

carte (f) – card; menu; map

caserne (f) – military barracks

cave (f) – wine cellar

chambre (f) – room

chambre d'hôte (f) – B&B

charcuterie (f) – pork butcher's shop and delicatessen; the prepared meats it sells

cimetière (m) – cemetery

col (m) – mountain pass

consigne or **consigne manuelle** (f) – left-luggage office

consigne automatique (f) – left-luggage locker

correspondance (f) – linking tunnel or walkway, eg in the metro; rail or bus connection

courette (f) – sleeping berth on a train or ferry

cour (f) – courtyard

crèmerie (f) – dairy or cheese shop

cyclisme (m) – cycling

dégustation (f) – tasting

demi (m) – 330mL glass of beer

demi-pension (f) – half board (B&B with either lunch or dinner)

département (m) – administrative division of France

donjon (m) – castle keep

douane (f) – customs

église (f) – church

embarcadère (m) – pier or jetty

épicerie (f) – small grocery store

ESF – École de Ski Français; France's leading ski school

fauteuil (m) – seat on trains, ferries or at the theatre

fest-noz or **festoù-noz** (pl) – night festival

fête (f) – festival

FN – Front National; National Front

forêt (f) – forest

formule or **formule rapide** (f) – similar to a *menu* but allows choice of whichever two of three courses you want (eg starter and main course or main course and dessert)

foUILLES (f pl) – excavations at an archaeological site

foyer (m) – workers or students hostel

fromagerie (f) – cheese shop

FUAJ – Fédération Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse; France's major hostel association

funiculaire (m) – funicular railway

galerie (f) – covered shopping centre or arcade

gare or **gare SNCF** (f) – railway station

gare maritime (f) – ferry terminal

gare routière (f) – bus station

gendarmerie (f) – police station; police force

gîte d'étape (m) – hikers accommodation, usually in a village

gîte rural (m) – country cottage

golfe (m) – gulf

GR – Grande Randonnée; long-distance hiking trail

grand cru (m) – wine of exceptional quality

halles (f pl) – covered market; central food market

halte routière (f) – bus stop

horaire (m) – timetable or schedule

hostellerie – hostelry

hôte payant (m) – paying guest

hôtel de ville (m) – city or town hall

hôtel particulier (m) – private mansion

intra-muros – old city (literally ‘within the walls’)

jardin (m) – garden

jardin botanique (m) – botanic garden

jours fériés (m pl) – public holidays

laverie (f) or **lavomatique** (m) – launderette

mairie (f) – city or town hall

maison de la presse (f) – newsagent

maison du parc (f) – a national park’s headquarters and/or visitors centre

marché (m) – market

marché aux puces (m) – flea market

marché couvert (m) – covered market

mas (m) – farmhouse in southern France

menu (m) – fixed-price meal with two or more courses

mistral (m) – incessant north wind in southern France

said to drive people crazy

musée (m) – museum

navette (f) – shuttle bus, train or boat

palais de justice (m) – law courts

parapente – paragliding

pardon (m) – religious pilgrimage

parlement (m) – parliament

parvis (m) – square

pâtisserie (f) – cake and pastry shop

patron(ne) (m/f) – boss

péage (m) – toll

pensions de famille (f pl) – similar to B&Bs

pétanque (f) – a game not unlike lawn bowls played with heavy metal balls on a sandy pitch; also called *boules*

piste cyclable (f) – bicycle path

place (f) – square or plaza

plage (f) – beach

plan (m) – city map

plan du quartier (m) – map of nearby streets (hung on the wall near metro exits)

plat du jour (m) – daily special in a restaurant

pont (m) – bridge

port (m) – harbour or port

port de plaisance (m) – marina or pleasure-boat harbour

porte (f) – gate in a city wall

poste (f) or **bureau de poste** (m) – post office

préfecture (f) – prefecture (capital of a *département*)

presqu’île (f) – peninsula

pression (f) – draught beer

puy (m) – volcanic cone or peak

quai (m) – quay; railway platform

quartier (m) – quarter or district

refuge (m) – mountain hut, basic shelter for hikers

région (f) – administrative division of France

rez-de-chausée (m) – ground floor

rive (f) – bank of a river

rond point (m) – roundabout

routier (m) – trucker; truckers restaurant

sentier (m) – trail

service des urgences (f) – casualty ward

ski de fond – cross-country skiing

SNCF – Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer; state-owned railway company

SNCM – Société Nationale Maritime Corse-Méditerranée; state-owned ferry company linking Corsica and mainland France

sortie (f) – exit

spectacle (m) – performance, play or theatrical show

square (m) – public garden

supplément (m) – supplement or additional cost

syndicat d’initiative (m) – tourist office

tabac (m) – tobacconist (also selling bus tickets, phonecards etc)

table d’orientation (f) – viewpoint indicator

taxe de séjour (f) – municipal tourist tax

télécarte (f) – phonecard

téléphérique (m) – cableway or cable car

télésiège (m) – chairlift

téléski (m) – ski lift or tow

TGV – Train à Grande Vitesse; high-speed train or bullet train

tour (f) – tower

tour d’horloge (f) – clock tower

vallée (f) – valley

vf (f) – *version française*; a film dubbed in French

vieille ville (f) – old town or old city

ville neuve (f) – new town or new city

vo (f) – *version originale*; a nondubbed film with French subtitles

voie (f) – train platform

VTT – *vélo tout terrain*; mountain bike

winstub – traditional Alsatian eateries

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