

## **THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT PARIS TO HELP YOU PREPARE**

(This information was compiled by AUSA from various online sources)

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### **Location and Geography**



Paris occupies the heart of a sedimentary basin in the western reaches of the great plains of Northern Europe. In the centre of the fluvial plain of the Seine, the city lies just downstream of the Seine-Marne confluence and upstream of the confluence with the Oise. The naturally occurring waterway crossroads explains the existence and exceptional development over fifteen centuries of this urban pole.

More precisely, Paris formed around the l'île de la Cité at the junction of two great waterways. The north-south axis weaves between the hills of Montmartre and Belleville over the hillock of la Chapelle, the gateway to gares du Nord et de l'Estand the Saint-Martin canal.

At Châtelet in the centre, the east-west axis runs alongside the Seine on the right bank, through la Bastille, the Louvre and the Champs-Élysées, over to the suburbs in Chaillot and beyond, la Défense. From there, the axis runs along Rue Saint-Martin and Rue Saint-Denis, crosses the Seine at the pont au Change and climbs up the right bank, following the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève.

### **Official Language and Religion**

The languages of France include the French language and some regional languages. The French language is the only official language of France according to the second article of the French Constitution, and is by far the most widely spoken.

Several regional languages are also spoken to varying degrees as a secondary language after French, such as German dialects (Alsatian 1.44%), Celtic languages (Breton 0.61%) and other Gallo-Romance languages (Langues d'Oïl 1.25%, Occitan 1.33%). Some of these languages have also been spoken in neighboring countries, such as Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Italy or Spain.

**Religion in France** is diversified. Freedom of religion and freedom of thought are guaranteed by virtue of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. The Republic is based on the principle of *laïcité* (or "freedom of conscience") enforced by the 1880s Jules Ferry laws and the 1905 French law on the Separation of the Churches and the State. Catholic Church, the religion of a majority of French people, is no longer the state religion that it was before the French Revolution and throughout the various, non-republican regimes of the 19th century (the Restoration, the July Monarchy and the Second French Empire).

## National Flag



The flag of France (French: *Drapeau français*) is a tricolor flag featuring three vertical bands colored blue (hoist side), white, and red. It is known to English speakers as the French Tricolor or simply the Tricolor.

The royal government used many flags, the best known being a blue shield and gold fleur-de-lis (the Royal Arms of France) on a white background, or state flag. Early in the French Revolution, the Paris militia, which played a prominent role in the storming of the Bastille, wore a cockade of blue and red, the city's traditional colors. According to French general Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, white was the "ancient French color" and was added to the militia cockade to create a tricolor, or national, cockade. This cockade became part of the uniform of the National Guard, which succeeded the militia and was commanded by Lafayette. The colors and design of the cockade are the basis of the Tricolor flag, adopted in 1790. The only difference was that the 1790 flag's colors were reversed. A modified design by Jacques-Louis David was adopted in 1794. The royal white flag was used during the Bourbon restoration from 1815 to 1830; the tricolor was brought back after the July Revolution and has been used ever since 1830.

## Climate

The average weather in Paris is temperate year-round. The best time to visit Paris would be in spring (April-June) or fall (September-November), when things are easier to come by. July and August the average temperatures run high and are the worst for crowds. Parisians desert their city, leaving it to the tourists.

### **What's the best time to go to Paris in France? Here are some annual weather facts we collected from our historical climate data:**

- The months June, July, August and September have nice weather with a good average temperature.
- On average, the warmest month is July.
- On average, the coolest month is December.

- May is the wettest month. This month should be avoided if you don't like too much rain.
- February is the driest month.

## Currency

The **Euro**, symbolized by a "€," has been in public circulation since January, 2002. The franc, the former official currency of France, is no longer accepted, however, you may see that some price tags in France give the price both in **Euro** and in francs, to help those who still think in terms of francs.

## Tipping

One of the most confusing things for visitors to Paris is figuring out the tip system. Unlike the US where tips are expected (and considered part of the wages paid), in France by law a 15% service charge is **always** included in the price wherever you eat or drink. No matter what anyone says, a service charge is always included. Guidebooks often underscore this fact, reminding you that the service is included. But also they add that it's okay to leave extra.

But Paris has many international visitors, and it's pretty common to leave something after a bite to eat or drink (leaving a few coins, or some bills, is called the *pourboire*, which roughly means "for something to drink.") But it's never expected and is only given for good or attentive service, or at a place you habituate frequently.

## Key Words/Phrases

Hi	-	Salut!
Good Morning	-	Boujour
Good Evening	-	Bonsoir! (After 6 pm)

Good Bye	-	Au revoir!
Welcome	-	Bienvenue!
How Are You?	-	Comment vas-tu?
Thank you (very much)	-	Merci (beaucoup!)
Can you help me?	-	Pouvez-vous m'aider? (polite)
Where is the bathroom?-		Ou sont les toilettes?
One moment please	-	Un moment s'il vous plait
How much is this?	-	Combien cela coute?
Excuse me (to ask)	-	Ezcusez-moi
Excuse me (to pass by)-		Pardon!
My name is	-	Je m'appelle

More found at: [http://www.linguanaut.com/english\\_french.htm](http://www.linguanaut.com/english_french.htm)