

# Travel & Driving Guide

## France

auto  europe.

fly  international™  
part of auto@europe.LLC

# Index

<b><u>Contents</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
<b>Tips on Driving in France</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Driving &amp; Child Safety Laws, Insurance</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Licensing, Min &amp; Max Age, Road Signs and Parking</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Car Rental FAQ's</b>	<b>6-7</b>
<b>France Regions at a Glance</b>	<b>7</b>
 <b><u>France Regions:</u></b>	
<b>Paris</b>	<b>8-9</b>
<b>Central France</b>	<b>10-11</b>
<b>Northern France</b>	<b>12-13</b>
<b>Eastern France</b>	<b>14-15</b>
<b>Southern France</b>	<b>16-17</b>
<b>Western France</b>	<b>18-19</b>
<b>Getting Into France</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Accommodation</b>	<b>21-22</b>
<b>Climate, Language and Public Holidays</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Stay Safe, Stay Healthy</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Key Facts on France</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>France Money Matters</b>	<b>26</b>

# Touring France By Car

France is an amazing country that has it all and it's no wonder it is the most visited country in the world. With less traffic on the road than neighboring countries, your rental car will give you a real feel for the true France with beautiful countryside filled with unparalleled cities, orchards, vineyards, fortified castles and tiny cobblestone villages seemingly untouched by time.

So whether you want to get a convertible and cruise with the top down in Bordeaux, mix with the celebrities in St. Tropez, ski down to your chalet in the Alps, or just keep it simple and kayak around Corsica with the kids, we can help you get there and make your dream become a reality. This guide is designed to help you plan your self drive holiday, with everything from choosing the right vehicle, road rules, driving tips and ideas on routes to make the most of France's diverse regions. There is endless possibilities with the freedom of your car rental.



## Tips on Driving In France

- Drive on the **RIGHT** hand side of the road. The driver sits on the left hand side of the car.
- If you park illegally you will receive a ticket. You can pay by buying a 'timbre fiscal' (tax stamp) from a tobacconist, stick it on the ticket and mail it to the authorities. If you see the officer or warden you can pay them direct and keep the receipt. Car rental companies will bill you and apply a surcharge.
- On almost all motorways you will pay a toll, depending on the distance. Pick-up a machine-dispensed ticket upon entering the motorway, then pay on exit; don't lose the ticket or you will pay the maximum fee. Choose your lane to pay by person or machine with a credit card.
- At roundabouts, signs will indicate that traffic on the roundabout has priority. If there is no sign then the traffic entering the roundabout has priority.

# France Driving Laws

- **Drunk Driving** is a very serious offense. The BAC limit is 0.05%. Exceeding this will incur severe penalties including a fine, imprisonment or confiscation of your license. So be smart - don't drink and drive!
- **Wearing a seat belt** is mandatory and children under 12 years must be in the back seat.
- **Talking on a hand held device** is forbidden.
- **Pedestrians and Cyclists** have the right of way.
- **In case of a breakdown** all vehicles must be equipped with a **Warning Triangle** and a **Reflective Jacket** that must be worn when outside the vehicle. The triangle placed 320 feet behind.
- **Unless otherwise specified** the speed limits are 80 mph (130kph) on motorways, 68 mph (110 kph) on urban motorways, 55 mph (90 kph) outside built-up areas and 31mph (50 kph) in cities.

## Child Safety Rules

The driver is responsible for all persons under the age of 14 years. Children under 12 years of age must be in the back seat. The Law requires all children less than 54 inches in height to use a child restraint appropriate to their weight and size:

- **Rearward-facing Baby Seat** - Birth to 15mth/28 lbs
- **Forward-facing Child Seat** - under 4 yrs/40 lbs
- **Booster Seat** - under 11yrs/79 lbs



Menton, French Riviera

# Insurance

Car Rental companies in France will normally include:

- **Third Party insurance:** Compulsory insurance that will be included in your car rental rate. This covers you for injuries to others and damage to their vehicle.
- **Collision Damage Waiver (CDW):** This limits your financial liability for damage to the rented vehicle, and is normally included in prepaid car rental rates. Rentals are normally subject to liability deductible, which can be reduced at the time you collect your rental car.
- **Theft Loss Cover:** This limits your financial liability for the loss or theft of the rented vehicle and is generally included in prepaid car rental rates.
- **Fire and Liability:** This limits your financial liability for bodily injury or death, and is normally included in prepaid car rental rates.
- **Personal Accident Insurance:** This covers the driver for personal injuries and is generally not included in your car rental rates. It is considered an optional extra that you can take upon collection of the car.

## Min & Max Age Requirements

**Min Driving Age:** Usually 21; however for full size vehicles the minimum age is 23.

**Young Driver's Surcharge:** Drivers aged 21-24 years may be charged from €30 including tax per day.

**Max Driving Age:** The majority of locations in France do not have a maximum driving age, however there may be restrictions for drivers aged 70-75 in some regions. In some cases, aged drivers may be required to hold a letter from their GP stating they are healthy and fit to drive. Check with Auto Europe for further details.

## License Requirements

A full driving license is required to drive in France. All drivers must have held a full valid driving license for a minimum of one year. North American residents are not required by law to have an international drivers license, although it is recommended to have in addition since an international license holds more credibility with the local traffic police than just your home driving license. Contact your local motoring association for further information.

Carry your driver's license with you when you travel, as some authorities may not recognize the international driver's license, and could ask for additional confirmation of your license.

## Road Signs



No Passing



No Entry



Stop



Parking



No Traffic



Yield



Prohibited



No Parking

## Parking

Alternate side parking or 'stationnement alterne semi-mensal' means you can only park on one side of the road depending on the date. Signs marked 1-15 or 16-31 means you cannot park on that side between those dates.

Parking on the left is only allowed on one way streets.

Pay-and-display machines are common through-out.

Free parking from 7:00pm - 9:00am, on weekends and public holidays, unless otherwise indicated.



# France Car Rental FAQs

**What kind of car should I rent for my holiday in France?**

This depends on where you're traveling, how many people are traveling and the style of driving you intend to do. Cars range from small (economy, compact) to larger size cars (intermediate, full size), to convertibles and luxury vehicles. For short trips with fewer passengers opt for the smaller cars; for longer trips with the family then a larger car, van or SUV would suit. There are plenty of car rental options to choose from; it all depends on your personal needs.

As a general rule of thumb in most European countries, the smaller the car the better as some roads were made before the general use of cars so lanes can be very narrow and winding. Diesel can save you money on fuel costs and can be requested for rental and guaranteed for an additional cost.

**How do I figure what car is right for me?**

You can use the ACRISS system to find the car that suits your needs. This is an internationally recognized code that will ensure that you get the same standard of vehicle wherever you rent.

Class	Fuel Capacity	Type	Transmission	Fuel/Air Cond.
M = Mini	0.8 - 1.0	B = 2 Door	M = Manual	R = Yes
E = Economy	1.0 - 1.4	D = 4 Door	A = Automatic	N = No
C = Compact	1.2 - 1.6	C = 2/4 door	N = Manual 4WD	D = Diesel Air
F = Full size	2.0 - 3.2	L = Limousine	C = Manual AWD	Q = Diesel No Air
P = Premium	2.0 - 4.2	S = Sports Car	B = Auto 4WD	H = Hybrid Air
L = Luxury	2.0 - 4.2	T = Convertible	D = Auto AWD	I = Hybrid No Air
X = Special	1.2 - 3.0	J = All Terrain		E = Electric Air
		R = Recreational		C = Electric No Air



F = 4 Wheel Drive
X = Special
K = Commercial Van/Truck
P = Premium
X = Special

**Examples:**

ECMN: E = Economy  
C = 2 or 4 door  
M = Manual  
N = No A/C

FDAR: F = Full Size  
D = 4 Door  
A = Automatic  
R = A/C

**Can I rental an automatic car in France?**

Yes you can, however automatics are generally more expensive and harder to get than manual cars.

**Will I be able to collect my rental car direct from the airport once I arrive, or will I have to take a shuttle bus to the depot?**

The majority of car rental companies have desks at both international and domestic airport terminals, and many will have a shuttle bus that will take you direct to your rental vehicle. Check with Auto Europe when you book to find out the details to collect the car.

**What are 'premium location' fees?**

Premium location fees applies when a vehicle is collected from an airport, railway or selected downtown locations. Auto Europe's car rental rates usually do include the airport or 'premium location' fees for car rental collections in France. Check on your prepaid voucher to ensure that this included.

**Do I need a credit card to collect my car rental?**

Yes. Car rental suppliers will usually freeze the deductible of the vehicle (from €600) which will be refunded to your credit card when the rental car is returned at the end of the rental. Some suppliers refund the deposit via a check that is mailed to the renter's residential address.

# More France Car Rental FAQs

**Can I collect my rental car in one France city and drop it off in another city in France?**

Yes, this is certainly possible, but in some cases there may be a one-way fee payable and a minimum rental duration when you collect your rental. Check with Auto Europe when you book to find out any additional costs. In most cases, there are no fees for one way rentals within France

**Can I collect my rental car in France and drop it off in another European city?**

International one ways are definitely possible however, as with any international one way, this will incur a one way fee. Prices vary depending on the supplier, the length of the rental and the drop off destination. You can expect to pay from €260 + tax.

**Can I collect my car in France, visit another European city, then return it to France?**

Most car rental companies based in France will permit travel to other European cities without an additional charge. However, luxury vehicles, such as Mercedes and BMW's are not permitted to enter Italy from France, with any supplier, and there may be restrictions to some Eastern Europe countries as well. Most car rental suppliers permit travel to the UK on the ferries from Calais to Dover at no charge, but you will have to pay for the cost of the ferry.

**Should I take out additional insurance on my car rental?**

Rental rates will include basic insurance: Collision Damage Waiver (CDW), Third Party Liability and Theft Protection. In the event that your rental vehicle is accidentally damaged (regardless of who is at fault) or stolen, the Insurance deductible is the maximum amount you are liable for. In France, the base amount of deductible begins at €510.

**Should I rent GPS for driving in France?**

GPS rental is available from Auto Europe. Our rates include the GPS and full country mapping. The GPS is delivered direct to your home or travel agent before you depart. GPS units can also be requested direct with some suppliers, however this will be at their own rates. If time is short though, or you would simply prefer to collect your GPS unit together with your rental, then this may be an option for you.

**What do I do if I want to extend my car rental while I'm in France?**

Once the car rental has commenced you can call Auto Europe toll free at 00-800-223-5555-5 who will arrange the car to be extended and you will be charged the additional days based upon the current rate with Auto Europe.

## France Regions at a Glance

Paris

Central France: Centre-Loire, Auvergne and Limousin

Northern France: Picardy, Nord Pad-de-Calais and Champagne-Ardenne

Eastern France: Lorraine and Alsace

Southern France: Aquitaine, Midi-Pyre`ne`es, Languedoc-Roussillon, Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur, Corsica, Riviera Cote d'Azur and Rhone-Alpes

Western France: Basse Normandy, Haute Normandy, Brittany and Pay-de-la-Loire



# Paris

Paris is known as the 'City of Lights' and conjures many different images for many different people. It is a spectacular sightseeing city containing a wealth of history and culture. The choices of things to see and do are limitless, a place where architectural and artistic heritage combine to make any visit an unforgettable experience. Savor its exceptional cuisine, indulge in its chic shopping and enjoy the nightlife that provides a wealth of entertainment options. Don't forget the river Seine weaving its way through the city, under numerous bridges that add to Paris' charm and romance. There is never a dull moment and there's something for everyone in this beautiful, bustling city.

## What's On

May:

- French Open, see the best in the most highly prized clay court title.

June:

- Fete de la Musique, musicians perform on every corner, in doorways, gardens and squares throughout the city and the sound of every type of music can be heard .

July:

- Fete des Tuileries, Paris fun fair takes place in beautiful gardens with side stalls, fairy floss, a traditional wooden merry-go-round and much more.
- Quartier d'Ete` Festival, is a cocktail of concerts, shows and theatre played out across Paris.
- Tour de France, arrival on the Champs-Elyse`es, be there with thousands of cycle fans to feel the excitement, it is a truly memorable experience.



Eiffel Tower & River Seine, Paris

## Best Things to See & Do

**Visit The Eiffel Tower** - Completed in 1889, it is one of the worlds most recognizable and the most visited monuments, with great views and restaurants, you can even go ice skating on it in the winter time; it's a must see.

**The Louvre Museum** - One of the finest museums in the world, home to thousands of classic and modern masterpieces. Walk through the history of France and into the minds of kings, revolutionaries and phenomenal artists.

**See the Cathedral of Notre Dame** - The finest example of French Gothic architecture Construction started in 1163 but was not complete until 1345, it tells the story of the bible in its portals, paintings and stained glass.

**The Arc de Triomphe** - Tells of the military glories and follies of France, ordered by Napoleon in 1809, it is decorated with friezes of battle scenes and carved with the names of his victories.

**Explore the Palace of Versailles** - One of the largest and most opulent castles, boasting around 2,143 windows, 1,252 fireplaces and 67 staircases. It was considered for a long time the unofficial center of power in France.

**A Cruise on the River Seine** - This provides a unique view of the monuments and bridges with informative historical and cultural commentary on board, which you can enjoy at night on a dinner cruise.

**The Moulin Rouge** - Seen as the birthplace of the can-can dance which can still be seen there today in this world famous club.

**Stroll along the world's grandest promenade** - The Champs-Elyse`es with its chestnut trees, shops, movie houses and blocks of sidewalk cafes, the best vantage point to watch Paris roll by.

**Explore the Latin Quartier** - popping in and out of cafes for wine, cognac and coffee, soaking up the Parisian lifestyle.



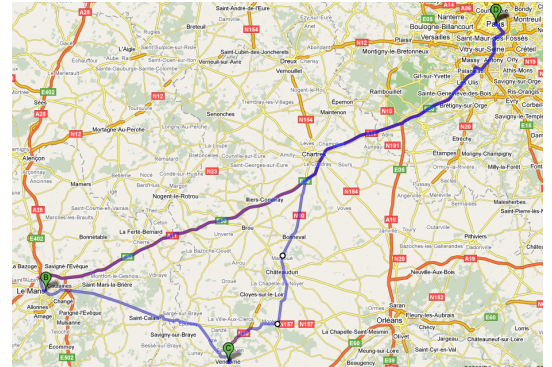
# Self Drive Tours around Paris

## Courts and Cars Tour



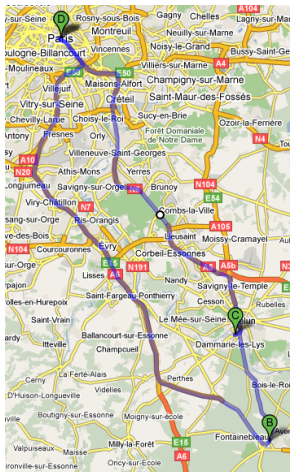
Chartres Cathedral

Head south-west on the A11/E50 to the small city of Chartres approximately an hour away from Paris, on the way you'll pass through the beautiful Center-Val de Loire region, famous for its vineyards and chateaux. Visit Chartres Cathedral a UNESCO World Heritage site, listen to the choir and organist or walk the labyrinth built around 1200 AD. It is known as 'The Road to Jerusalem'. Out of town the same road will take you on to Le Mans which has a gloriously restored old city with cobbled streets and half timbered houses, famous for the 24 Hours of Le Mans, the world's oldest endurance sports car race.



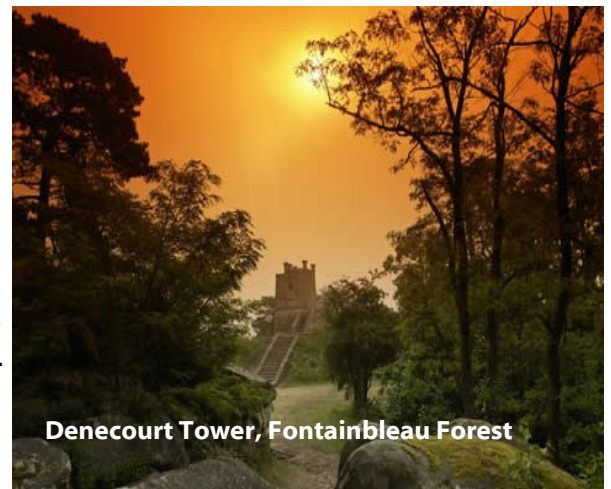
Then take the N157 to get to Vendôme. Sitting on the Loire river on the south side is the ruined castle of the counts of Vendôme that was founded in the 9th century, surviving still are numerous towers and extensive walls. The abbey is also worth a look with a fine florid gothic style and an interesting belfry from the 12th century. Heading back to on the N10 will take you to the Palace of Versailles.

## Back to Nature Tour



Drive south-east from the center of Paris for 60kms to Fontainebleau, a lovely historic town that is surrounded by a large scenic forest, with 3,000 species of mushrooms, 2,000 animal species and 5,000 insect species. Formerly a royal hunting park it is now protected and well regarded by climbers for bouldering, a type of climbing without ropes. Within the forest are dozens of villages, and you can drive along the river Seine to visit them. There is also one of the largest historic chateaus, once owned by kings. Today it is home to a school of art, architecture and music.

From there take the D606 onto the N6 following the water to Sens where much activity awaits. Head to the awesome swimming pools, go carting or perhaps wander around the Serres municipales (greenhouses) creating different landscape zones of flora, best of all it's free to visit. Head back to Paris on the A5/E54.



Denecourt Tower, Fontainebleau Forest

# Central France

The Central region is dominated by the Loire Valley and is one of the loveliest drives in France that never ceases to amaze tourists and locals alike with its natural beauty. In Limousin you can choose to drive through the Creuse, Correze or Haute-Vienne department you will be thrilled with the breathtaking lakes, rivers, chestnut forests, heather and vast expanses of countryside. The Massif Central has a rugged landscape of granite and hardened lava, violet-colored volcanic rock and deep river gorges giving it an almost prehistoric feel.

Regions/Cities: Center-Loire - Chartres, Orl`eans, Blois, Tours, Bourges, Chateauroux. Limousin - Gu`eret, Limoges, Tulle. Auvergne - Moulins, Clermont-Ferrand, Le Puy-en-Velay, Aurillac.

## What's On

March:

- Le Printemps de Bourges, Center, A large music festivals held around the city. Many pubs and bars also celebrate the event by hosting bands as well.

May:

- Joan of Arc week, Orleans, Center, residents dress in traditional clothing, enjoy medieval food and local customs.

August:

- Festival of Light, Amboise, Center, listen to classical music and watch the fireworks.

September:

- Bird King Festival, Le Puy-en-Velay, Auvergne. A re-enactment of a medieval fair where everyone gets involved, walk the tiny cobblestone streets and you will think you're in the 16th century.

## Best Things to See & Do

Loire Valley, Center - Visit one of the many wineries, producing 22 fine wines including Menetou-Salon and Bourgueil. Sample some of the region's exceptional cheeses such as Crottin de Chavignol and Selles-sur-Cher, or discover a dazzling string of fairytale Chateaux including Blois, Amboise and the sprawling Chambord.

Visit the Marais, Bourges, Center - An area of allotment gardens divided by canals. If you go on the weekend you will see the gardeners tending to their plots.

Auvergne - Has a plethora of outdoor activities to enjoy including skiing, rafting, biking, golfing, hiking and many other lake water sports.

Monts Domes, Auvergne - This is an extraordinary area of extinct volcanos, the highest is Puy de Dome with a stunning panorama of almost 100 other peaks.

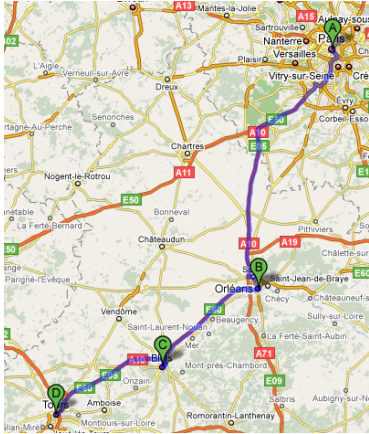
Vichy, Auvergne - Spa and resort town famous for its sulphurous springs which attracts thousands every year.



Chenonceaux Castle, Loire Valley

# Self Drive Tours around Central

## Chateaus and Vineyards Tour



From Paris head south west on the E05 and join the A10 to Orleans (120km), which in medieval times was the capital of France. Sitting on the banks of the Loire river it is well worth a visit to stroll along the pretty streets and dine at the local restaurants. The picturesque Loire Valley is renowned for its beautiful chateaux, fine wine vineyards and wonderful cuisine.

Out of Orleans rejoin the E05/A10 or the free national highway N152 to stop off at Blois, a lively historic town to see the famous renaissance Chateau once occupied by King Louis XII in the center of town. Then on the same roads to Tours, a large city famous for its fine wines, Cathedral and Art's Museum.

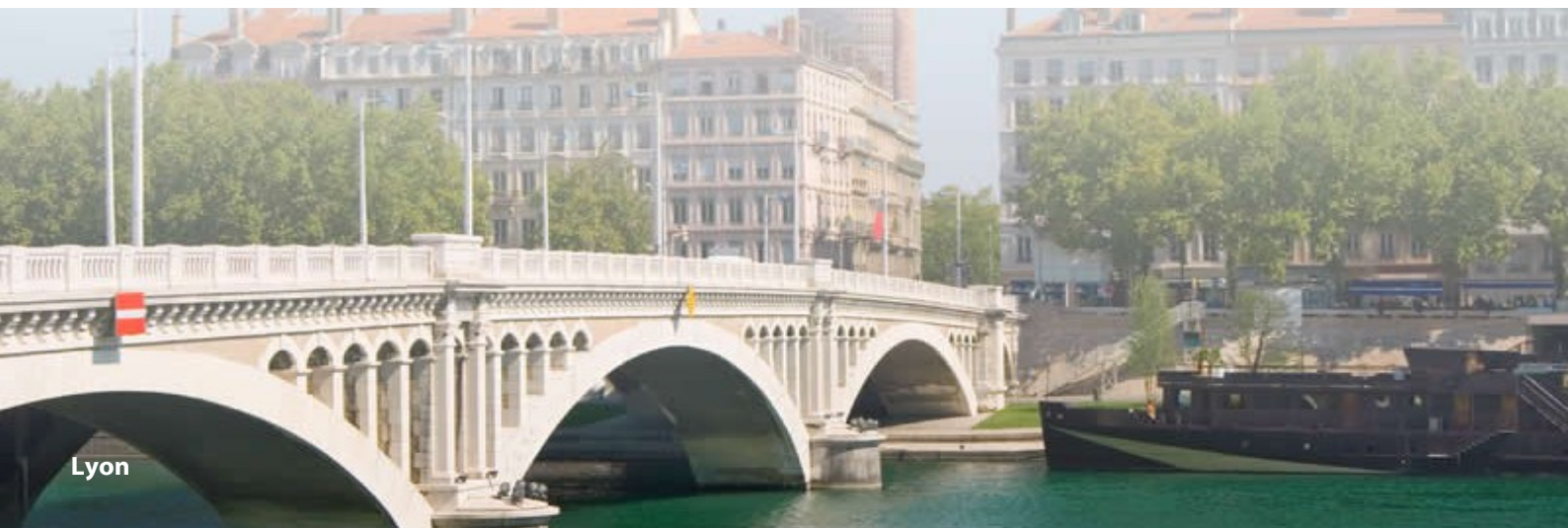
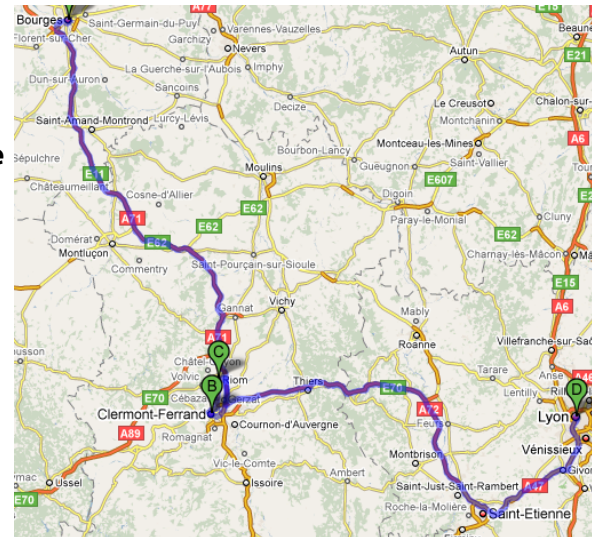


Vineyard, Loire Valley

## Volcanos and Voulevonts Drive

Starting in Bourges, a whole city full of lovely houses, some half timber, others in a light stone that is a characteristic of the city. Take the A71/E11 heading for Clermont-Ferrand in the Massif Central, famous for the Chaine des puy (chain of volcanoes) surrounding it, about 40km long with 48 cinder cones, 8 lava domes and 15 craters. Be sure to stop off along the way at Riom to see its Renaissance architecture fashioned out of the local black volcanic stone, best viewed from the 16th century clock tower.

Head east on the A72/E70 on to Lyon the second largest city which is known as the culinary capital of France as it is full of France's finest chefs, so try the morning snack the Machones made up of local meats. It is also known for its professional football team, Olympique Lyonnais who participate in the European championships, so why not take in a match at the city's huge stadium.



Lyon

# Northern France

The landscape of Northern France is very diverse. It ranges from dunes, to 650 ft. tall white cliffs, to crystal Lakeland's and deep forests, and is renowned for its rich flora and fauna. A bird lovers paradise being on a migratory route for many species, some endangered. A region of festivities and human warmth where people love life and are ready to celebrate with parades, carnivals and fun fairs. Monuments and belfries stand with Norman buildings and fortified constructions, this wealth of architectural heritage is enhanced by natural surroundings that are perfect for active leisure pursuits, whether on foot, bicycle or on the water of the great lakes you can enjoy it all.

**Regions/Cities:** Picardy - Amiens, Beauvais, Laon. Nord Pas-de Calais - Lille, Arras. Champagne-Ardenne - Reims, Charleville-M' ezi`eres, Chatons-en-Champagne, Troyes, Chaumont.

## What's On

**March:**

- **Marrow and Sorcery Festival, Marchiennes, Nord-Pas de Calais.** The only festival of its kind, poetic, cultural and spellbinding, finish each evening with the lightings of the witches stake.

**September:**

- **La Braderie, Lillie, Nord-Pas de Calais.** Street fair with everything from paintings, antiques and ornaments, it has a very fun atmosphere.

**October:**

- **Jazz Festival Plan`etes, Tourcoing, Nord-Pas de Calais.** A selection of concerts, creations and discoveries it's cutting edge international jazz at its best.

**December:**

- **Christmas Markets, Arras, Nord-Pas de Calais.** Sixty exhibitors with a wide selection of arts, crafts and local delicacies which including chocolate rats and heart shaped biscuits.

## Best Things to See & Do

**Notre Dame d'Amiens, Picardy - 13th century gothic cathedral with a breathtaking nave and a stunning choir, it's a world heritage site.**

**Hortillonnages, Amiens, Picardy - 240 acres of market gardens on small islands surrounded by a network of navigable canals.**

**Castle-museum of Boulogne, Nord-Pas de Calais - Exhibition of mask, Greek ceramics, Roman sculptures and painting, an Egyptian collection and African art.**

**Olhain Park, Lille, Nord-Pas de Calais - 1100 acres of national forest, the park provides numerous sports and leisure activities including several pools.**

**Musee d'Art moderne, Lille, Nord-Pas de Calais - Get personal with Picassos as there are no barriers, glass or rope to hold you back.**

**Cathedral of Reims, Champagne-Ardenne - From 987 all but six kings were crowned here, it is a masterpiece of the middle ages.**

**Palace of Tau, Reims, Champagne-Ardenne - Archiepiscopal palace served as the residence of kings during their coronation, where royal banquets took place.**

**Epernay, Champagne-Ardenne - 50,000 acres of vineyards, 200 million bottles ageing, in 75 miles of cellars carved out of the chalk soil over hundreds of years.**

**Le Cirque, Chalons-en-Campagne - The old town circus completed in 1899 is the National circus arts center the only higher education institution des Arts du Cirque in Europe.**

**16th Century Houses, Troyes, Champagne-Ardenne - Stroll the narrow streets lined with multi story wooden houses, decorated with carvings and sculptures.**

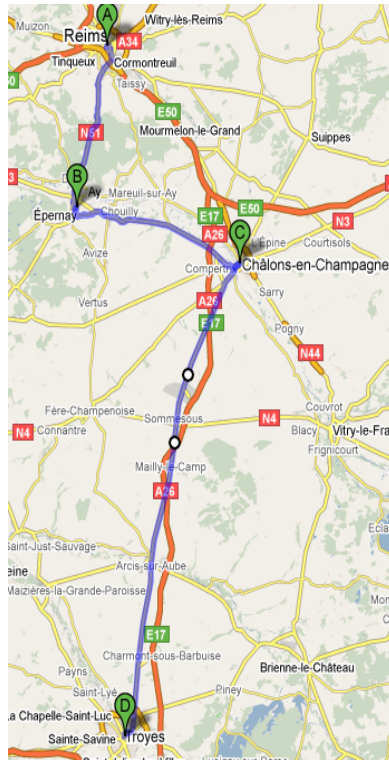


# Self Drive Tours around Northern France

## Champagne of Kings Tour

Starting in Reims where kings were crowned and the German's High Command formally surrendered in WW2, there is much to see and learn. Then head for the heart of Champagne in Epernay on the N51 and take the Route Touristique de Champagne winding around the town offering friendly cellars, chateaux and villages bedecked with flowers all afloat on a sea of vines.

Then a short way on the D3 to Chalons-en-Champagne and pass through the Porte Sainte-Croix, as Marie-Antoinette did on her way to marry the King Louis XVI and visit the old town circus. Take the N77 to the city of Troyes which is shaped like the cork of a Champagne bottle with the body defined by tree-lined Boulevards and the rounded top circled by the river Seine.



## Route of Battlefield to Belfries

Starting in Amiens follow the river Somme to the English channel down D3 to the medieval village of Saint-Valery-sur-Somme, where you can take a stroll on the boardwalk and visit the beaches famous for the bloody battle in WW1. Travel along the coast taking in the spectacular cliffs of Cote d'opale on the D940 to Calais where on a clear day you can see the white cliffs of Dover. If you're in the mood for some shopping head to the huge Cite Europe and factory outlet center.

Again head along the coast to Dunkerque where the largest sea evacuation in military history took place. Then along the Belgium border on the A25/E42 to Lille, the 4th largest city in France, where you can fine all the great features of Paris without the crowds and price tag.



# Eastern France

This region is one of France's better kept secrets that is often overlooked, as it has many beautiful buildings, prestigious honors and treasures to discover. Situated at a European crossroads, Eastern France has resulted in a blend of cultural influences. It is a nature lover's paradise abundant in wildlife including deer, wild boar and mountain goats, and the sky is often filled with flocks of migratory birds that are drawn to the rich environment. In the Vosges Mountains there are a selection of winter sports in a breathtaking setting of mountains, huge forests, hilltops and endless vistas. And with loads of navigable waterways you'll never be short of anything wonderful to see or do.

Regions/Cities: Lorraine - Metz, Bar-le-Duc, Nancy, Epinal. Alsace - Strasbourg, Colmar, Mulhouse.

## What's On

May:

- **Sundays in Meuse, Lorraine.** Hundreds of volunteers revive over 100 19th century trades and crafts at an event like no other.

June:

- **Feast of St. John, Upper Vosges, Lorraine.** Marks the lumberjack festival and bonfire nights at the summer solstice.

August:

- **Mirabelle Festival, Metz, Lorraine.** Celebrates the plum that forms the base for many desserts and liqueurs, with concerts, fireworks and the election of a queen.

September:

- **Spectre Film Festival, Strasbourg, Alsace.** Devoted to science fiction, horror and fantasy.

December:

- **Christmas Market, Strasbourg, Alsace.** It is the oldest in France in its 431st year and one of the largest Christmas markets.

## Best Things to See & Do

**Verdun Battlefield, Lorraine** - Walk through the fortified hills that surround Verdun where a war of attrition took place in WW1 which lead to an enormous loss of life.

**Global Center for Peace, Palace of Verdun** - The world peace, freedom and human rights Center is a place of reflection for promoting peace, freedom and human rights.

**Saint Stephen Cathedral, Metz, Lorraine** -

Very impressive Gothic cathedral built between 1220 and 1520, with more than 6500m2 of windows it the most luminous in France.

**Metz Flea Market, Lorraine** - Everything you could ever want from pottery to antique furniture to fabrics to collectables.

**Place Stanislas, Nancy, Lorraine** - A square paved in light ochre stones with the harmonious buildings of City Hall, Opera-Theatre and the Fine Arts Museum, a World Heritage Listed site.

**Petite-France, Strasbourg, Alsace** - On the 'Grande Ile, where the river Ill splits into canals and cascades, running through an enchanting neighborhood of medieval houses and sandstone buildings.

**Strasbourg Cathedral, Alsace** - With stunning pink sandstone facade and a lengthy show put on by the circa-1800's astrological clock at 12.30pm each day.

**Maison des Tetes, Colmar, Alsace** - Meaning House of the Heads a marvellous Renaissance building decorated with faces, one of the oldest in town.

**Hotel de Ville, Mulhouse, Alsace** - The 16th century town hall is built in a Renaissance style and is know for its trompe l'oeil (trick of the eye) paintings.

**Cite' de l'Automobile, Mulhouse, Alsace** - Home to the Schlumpf Collection of classic automobiles, the largest collection of Bugatti automobiles in the world.

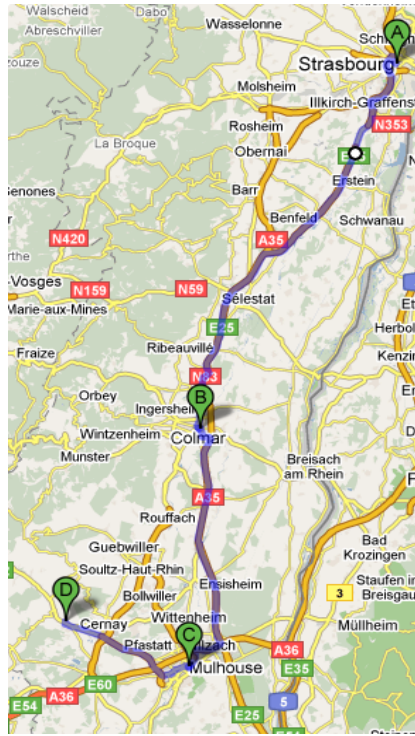


# Self Drive Tours around Eastern France

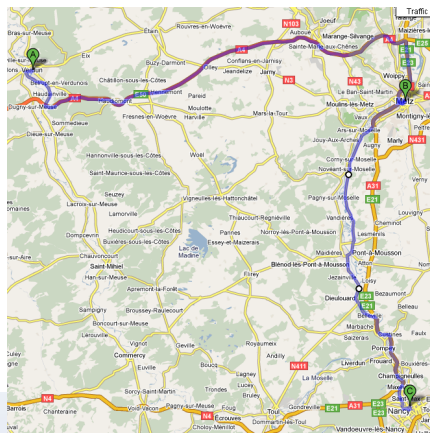
## Cultural Fusion Tour

Strasbourg is where France and Germany collide and cultures fuse into one. The historic city center, the 'Grande Ile' (Grand Island) was the first entire city to become a world heritage site. Head south on the E25 to Colmar which is stunningly beautiful and well preserved, then take a stroll along the old streets and many shops.

Back on the A35/E25 to Mulhouse to visit many of its distinct districts created from the culmination of different centuries. From there, why not take a scenic drive in the Vosges Mountains on the 'Route des Cretes' taking in waterfalls, lakes and forested summits. Start in Cernay then head back toward Colmar. Or you could take the 'Route des Vins' though vineyards, castles, fortifications and convents, starting in then ending near Strasbourg.



## Reflection and Art Tour



Start this tour in the old town of Verdun. Strategically positioned, it was the pivot of the French front line and one of France's strongest fortresses in WW1. Then take the D603 onto N3 to Metz, known as the garden city, with 20 miles of landscaped walks along rivers, canals and ramparts. Heading south the N57 winds by the Moselle river, passing by Pont-A-Mousson along the way with beautiful hilly surroundings making it great hiking territory. Then keep on going to Nancy, a center of art and architecture that rival Paris, and you can visit the museum that exhibits Art Nouveau. It sits on the two rivers of Meurthe and Rhine as well as Marne Canal.



Metz, Lorraine

# Southern France

Sharing borders with the Atlantic, Spain, the Mediterranean, the French Riviera, Italy and Switzerland this is an exciting area and a favorite for driving holidays. The diversity of its landscape is equaled only by the wealth of its heritage. The vast countryside includes Europe's largest forest 'Les Landes' and highest peak Mont Blanc, not to mention numerous Unesco World Heritage sites. By the coast you will find rocky inlets, turquoise waters, luxury Riviera resorts, chic cities, fascinating harbors and colorful fishing villages. Then there's the Alps with the largest skiing area in the world and famous resorts, set above discreet little villages nestled in the valleys. All this plus a plethora of accommodation options, it is all there for you to discover.

**Regions/Cities:** Aquitaine - P`erigueux, St Emilion, Bergerac, Bordeaux, Arcachon, Agen. Midi-Pyre`ne`es - Cahors, Rodez, Montauban, Toulouse, Auch. Languedoc-Roussillon - Mende, Nimes, Montpellier, Carcassonne, Perpignan. Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur - Gap, Digne, Avignon, Marseille, Toulon. Corsica - Bastia, Ajaccio. Riviera Cote d'Azur - Nice. Rhone-Alpes - Lyon, St-Etienne, Valence, Grenoble, Chambery, Annecy.

## What's On

**February:**

- **Lemon Festival, Menton, Cote d'Azur.** Unbelievable citrus sculptures, moonlight parade and the gardens of light, make this event not to be missed.

**May:**

- **Cannes Film Festival, Cote d'Azur.** Hosting movie stars from Hollywood, New York and all throughout Europe.

**June:**

- **Valr`eas Festival, Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur.** Celebrated since 1504 with costumed actors and a torch-lit parade.

**July:**

- **Grand Falconer Day, Cordes, Midi-Pyr`en`ees.** A major medieval festival with concerts and performances all over and a great banquet open to all.

**August:**

- **Feria de B`eziers, Languedoc-Roussillon.** Bullfighting which attracts a million visitor to the 5 day event.

**December:**

- **Fete des lumi`eres, Lyon, Rhone-Alpes.** A tradition dictates that every house place candles along all their windows creating a spectacular effect, and the Place des Terreaux hosts a light show.



## Best Things to See & Do

**Bordeaux, Aquitaine -** A most elegant city devoted to the export of fine wine, with 18th century palaces, wonderful shops, medieval streets and plenty of vineyards. **The Caves of the V`ez`ere valley, Aquitanie -** Containing a wealth of amazing prehistoric animal paintings up to 20,000 years old.

**La Roque-Gageac, Aquitaine -** A magnificent village built into a golden limestone cliff sitting along side the Dordogne river, with troglodyte caves up above.

**Pilgrimage to Lourdes, Hautes-Pyr`ene`es -** Famous for the Marian apparitions of Our Lady of Lourdes said to have occurred in 1858 to Bernadette Soubirous.

**Carcassonne, Languedoc-Roussillon -** The largest medieval city in Europe which is encircled by towers and battlements.

**African Reserve, Sigean, Languedoc-Roussillon -** Take a drive around with over 1,600 wild animals roaming free including lions, giraffes and elephants.

**Calanques of Cassis, Cote-d'Azur -** Small inlets with tiny, pine-fringed beaches and dramatic limestone cliffs, popular for swimming, snorkeling and rock climbers too.

**The Popes Palace, Avignon, Provence -** The center of the Roman church in medieval times, built in the 15th century it is definitely worth a visit.

**Aix-en-Provence -** A favorite small city filled with beautiful 18th century fountains, elegant architecture, winding streets and lively markets.

**Carpentras, Vaucluse -** An ancient city whose known history commenced in 5 BC as the capital of the Celtic tribe. A bustling market every Friday spreads throughout the narrow streets.

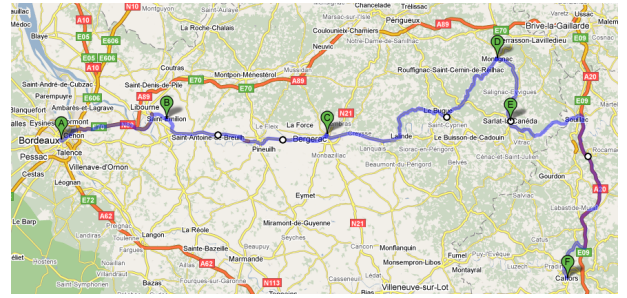


# Self Drive Tours around South France

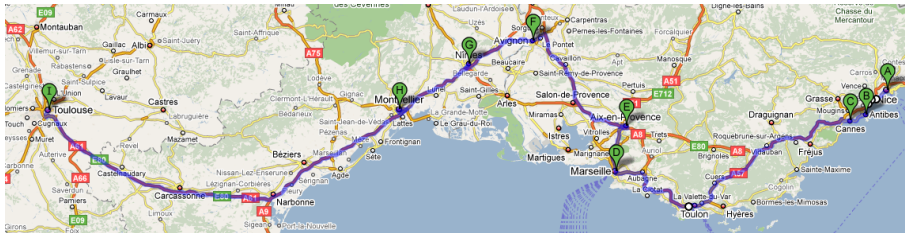
## Wines, Castles & Caves Tour

Out of Bordeaux head north east to take the E70/N89 to the World Heritage site of Saint Emillion to visit one of France's principal red wine areas - don't forget to designate your driver! From there drive straight onto the D936 which follows the Dordogne river, take in the breathtaking scenery to Bergerac, the largest and most important town in the Region, where you can explore the lovely streets and squares. Head west out of town following the river once again and join the D703 that will take you deep into the Perigord, an untouched area famous for its truffles.

At Champagne take the D706 which flows along beside the V`ez`ere river on your way to Montignac to see the prehistoric cave paintings. After your visit head back down the D704 passing Forest Domaniale Barde on your way to Sarlat one of the most attractive and alluring towns. Out of town, take the D704a onto D703 to join up with the main highway A20/E09 to Cahors which is dramatically contained within the Lot river on three sides. It has been famous for its black wine since the middle ages.



## The French Riviera



Jump on the coastal road from Nice to Antibes, a fun place for relaxing or check out the magnificent Fort. Then on to Cannes on the coast road - it's just around the corner. At the fashionable resort you could attend one of the many visual art events. From there take the main high-

way A8/E80, exit onto the A57 to Toulon then A50 will take you to one of France's oldest cities, Marseille, that is situated on the Mediterranean Sea and is the second largest port in Europe. From there take the E712 to Aix-en-Provence, a sophisticated city with graceful boulevards and sidewalk cafes.

Take the A8 onto the A7/E714 to Avignon one of the most beautiful cities in France thanks to its architecture and artistic heritage. Cross the Rhone on the N100 then join the A9/E15 to Nimes one of the richest and finest Roman cities of Gaul. The same road will take you to Montpellier whose university, founded in 1289, has had a continuous medical facility since the 10th century. Out of town take the E15 and continue on the E80 to the fortified city of Carcassonne to visit the fortress, fully restored in 1853 it is now a World Heritage Site. To finish in Toulouse take the main road out A61/E80 and visit the largest space center in Europe.



Marseille

# Western France

For many, the first port of call on a driving holiday with miles of coastline, and soaring white cliffs standing guard over pebbly coves and long stretches of golden sand. Rich in gastronomy as fresh fish, shellfish, duck and dairy produce are in abundance. Not to forget it's the birth place of many of France's famous cheeses. With a sophisticated landscape of manors, castles with moats, neat orchards, prestigious stud farms, thatched cottages and tall hedgerows. The drink of choice comes from the orchard instead of the vine in the form of cider and Calvados, an apple brandy rarely seen outside of France. Take a journey through the western peninsula of Brittany whose Celtic history is shown in the people's language, customs and dress in a vivid homage to their past.

**Regions/Cities:** Basse Normandie - Caen, Saint-Lo, Alencon, Evreux. Haute Normandie - Rouen. Brittany - Rennes, St-Brieuc, Quimper, Vannes. Pays-de-la-Loire - Le Mans, Laval, Angers, Nantes, La-Roche.

## What's On

**May:**

- Jazz under the apple trees, festival at Coutances, Normandy.

**June:**

- Puy du Fou, Les Epesses, Pays-de-la-Loire. A historic theme park set in period villages with 800 actors and 50 horseman reacting scenes and battles of the past.

**July:**

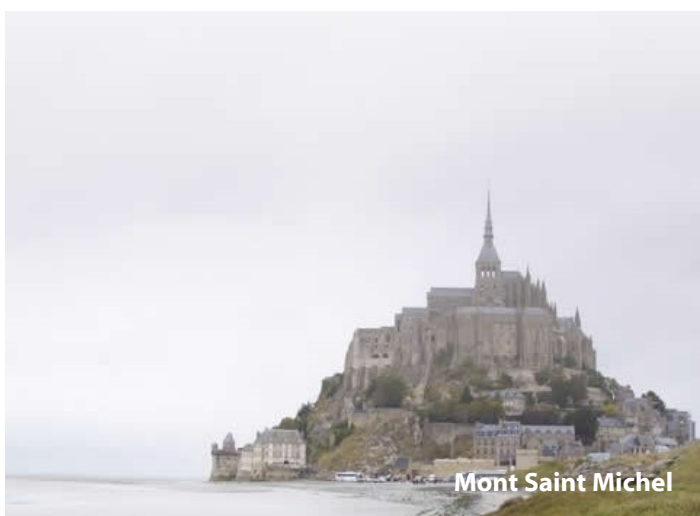
- Festival of music, song and dance in Rennes, Brittany.

**August:**

- Sea shanty festival, Paimpol, Brittany, which attracts thousands of visitors over 3 days.

**September:**

- Musical September in the Orne, Normandy. Classical music throughout the region.



## Best Things to See & Do

Visit the D-Day beaches, Normandy - The landing site for the invasion and liberation of Europe from Nazi Germany.

Abbaye aux Hommes, Caen, Normandy - A magnificent monastery ordered by William the Conqueror in the 11th century.

Chateau de Caen, Caen, Normandy - Built in 1066 it is one of the largest medieval fortresses of Western Europe, housing the museums of fine arts and of Normandy.

Cider Route, Cambremer, Normandy - Clearly marked and passes from village to village, producer to producer, through narrow lanes in the beautiful countryside.

Bayeux Tapestry, Normandy - 230 feet long and one of the oldest complete tapestries in the world that chronicles the conquest of England in 1066.

Mont-Saint-Michel, Normandy - A rocky islet topped by a famous gothic abbey, an architectural masterpiece built in the 13th century, .5 miles off the coast.

Saint-Malo, Brittany - Walk the ramparts where the view of the Emerald Coast is mind-blowing; it should take two hours.

Quimper, Brittany - Take a boat and drift down the prettiest river in France to the open sea at Benodet.

Carnac, Brittany - 3000 prehistoric standing stones dating from the Neolithic Age, the most extensive collection in the world.

# Self Drive Tours around Western France

## Cathedrals to Conquerors Tour



Start this tour in Rouen, the capital of Haute region, that sits on the river Seine and has the tallest cathedral tower in France. Take the N15 all the way to Le Havre, which is the busiest port for cruise ships and is a World Heritage Site because of

the post war contemporary architecture. Just across the river is the beautiful picturesque port of Honfleur, characterized by its 7 story houses, which continues to be painted by generations of impressionists who still set their easels on the quay.

Continue along the English channel on the D513 to Caen, the capital of the Basse region, famous for its historical buildings built during the reign of William the Conqueror. Then take the N13/E46 to Bayeux to see the famous Tapestry. Follow the N13 enjoying the dramatic coastline to Cherbourg on the end of the peninsula, it holds an arsenal of the French Navy. Then take the D900 and at Periers change onto D971 and onto the D7 to magnificent Mont-Saint-Michel, one of the most visited attractions in France.



Rouen Cathedral

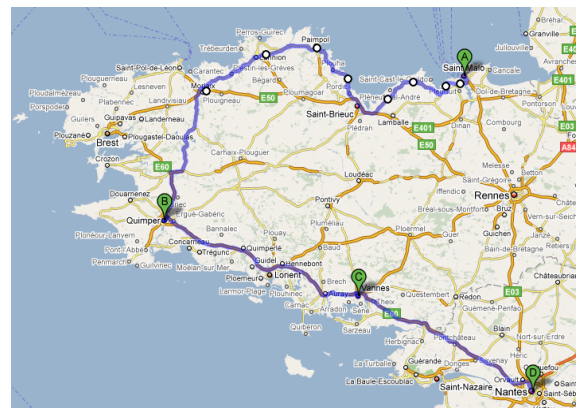
## Celtic History by the Sea Tour

Start in the walled city of Saint Malo, whose history extends to beyond Roman times and used to be an island in the middle ages. Cross the river and visit Dinar, made famous by the aristocrats who, in the 1830's, left behind 407 mansions in different architectural styles. From Dinar, follow the rugged indented coastline along on the 786 to Paimpol, popular for its port, beaches, markets and charming cobbled streets filled with lively restaurants, cafes and bars. Again follow the coast on the D786 to Morlaix, where overhanging houses are constructed of stone and timber, with religious and secular sculptures on their facades.

Head across the peninsula taking the N12 onto the D785 to Quimper, which is the oldest Breton city and a relaxed place famous for its hand painted pottery. Take the E60 down the coast to Vannes to visit the prehistoric Carnac. Then, a little further down on the same road spend some time at Gu`erande said to be the most beautiful beach with a park full of canals and learn about the salt flat harvest. Finally take the N171 onto the N165 to Nantes; it is considered one of the best places to live and has a great nightlife.



Vannes, Brittany



# Getting into France

## France Airport Information

**Paris Charles de Gaulle International Airport**  
[www.paris-cdg.com](http://www.paris-cdg.com)  
Tel: +33 1 7036 3950

**Paris Orly International Airport**  
[www.aeroportsdeparis.fr](http://www.aeroportsdeparis.fr)  
Tel: +33 1 4975 1515

**Bordeaux International Airport**  
[www.bordeaux.aeroport.fr](http://www.bordeaux.aeroport.fr)  
Tel: +33 5 5634 5050

**Lyon Saint-Exupery International Airport**  
[www.lyon.aeroport.fr](http://www.lyon.aeroport.fr)  
Tel: +33 8 2680 0826

**Marseille Provence Airport**  
[www.marseille.aeroport.fr](http://www.marseille.aeroport.fr)  
Tel: +33 4 4214 1414

**Toulouse Blagnac Airport**  
[www.toulouse.aeroport.fr](http://www.toulouse.aeroport.fr)  
Tel : +33 1 7046 7474

**Strasbourg Entzheim International Airport**  
[www.strasbourg.aeroport.fr](http://www.strasbourg.aeroport.fr)  
Tel: +33 3 8864 6767

**Lille Lesquin Airport**  
[www.lille.aeroport.fr](http://www.lille.aeroport.fr)  
Tel: +333 204 967 47



La Rochelle Harbour

## France Ferry Port Information

### **North Sea:**

**Boulogne**  
[www.portboulogne.com](http://www.portboulogne.com)  
Tel: +33 03 21 99 6200

**Calais**  
[www.calais-port.com](http://www.calais-port.com)  
Tel: +33 03 21 96 6240

**Havre**  
[www.havre-port.net](http://www.havre-port.net)  
Tel: +33 08 25 30 4304

### **Mediterranean Sea: Atlantic Ocean:**

**Marseille**  
[www.marseille-port.fr](http://www.marseille-port.fr)  
Tel: +33 04 91 39 4000

**Nice**  
[www.riviera-ports.com](http://www.riviera-ports.com)  
Tel: +33 04 93 63 9625

**La Rochelle**  
[www.portlarochelle.com](http://www.portlarochelle.com)  
Tel: +33 05 46 44 4120



Nice Harbor

# Accommodation Ideas

## Hotels

Hotel choices are endless, as there are many familiar names in all cities that run 24 hours a day. Almost all have a restaurant serving excellent local and seasonal food to suit all tastes, and most have a breakfast buffet and/or room service. A bar and outdoor area are also common. You will also find most of these services in regional areas locally run with warm and friendly staff. For stays of 3 days or longer full-board are usually offered.

## Bed & Breakfasts

Although B&B accommodation is less common than across the channel in the UK, there are many interesting options to give you a real feel for the place, including manor houses, farmsteads and even barges. Located in small villages and towns, many have gardens and are close to water. Taking full advantage of local produce, the cuisine is excellent. They are often run by other nationals offering English or German as well as French hospitality.

## Guest Houses

Guest Houses are good for families or two couples as suites and are available with shower/toilet and flexible bedding options. All with the rural charm and atmosphere of a bed & breakfast, only with more space.

## Resorts

The variety of options does not stop with resorts, so whether you would like a seaside resort on the French Riviera, a famous ski resort in the Alps or spa resort town, complete complexes with indoor and outdoor heated pools, Jacuzzis, gym and mud wraps the choice is yours.

## Farmhouse Holiday

This is a great option for small groups or large families, usually sleeping up to 6 people. Restored spacious self catered accommodation with a pool, a garden with furniture and a BBQ. With the local market, shops and restaurants nearby to provide all your needs.

## Chateaux

Steeped in history, romantic castles offer luxury rooms and suites with bath tubs. All in lovely surroundings of gardens, terraces, parks and sometimes moats. Owners are only too happy to provide information on the history of the building and very interested in preserving its heritage. Most offer a large range of leisure activities.

## Self Catering

'Gites' are holiday homes, often old farmhouses, in the country used for self catering accommodation all over France. Perfect for families or groups, consisting of a living area, a kitchenette, bathroom and bedroom all self-contained. An ideal place to unwind and relax, and they are usually situated in an area with plenty to do and see if you want.



# More Accommodation Ideas

## Motorhomes

All the convenience of accommodation and transport in one! Rent a Motorhome from Auto Europe, the France campervan specialists. For more information, go to [www.autoeurope.com](http://www.autoeurope.com)



## Camping/Caravanning

There are more than 11,000 campsites throughout France and they are all rated with a star system. The higher rated campsites offer more facilities and consequently higher prices. France also has many supported tourism schemes where you can camp on farms, chateaux and even vineyards. There are also self catering campsites offering tents, mobile homes and chalets on site. Facilities may include pools, shops, bars and playgrounds.

## Youth Hostels

There are hundreds of youth hostels in France, you will find one in all major towns, offering very simple accommodation at very low prices. Stays are limited to 3 or 4 nights or a week in Paris. Hostels are open to all members of the National Youth Association upon presentation of membership.



## Cabin Cruising

France has over 1,200 miles of navigable rivers and canals systems, so cruising is the perfect way to explore the wonderful countryside and small villages hidden in historic regions. There are many options available, such as self drive boat rentals, crewed barges converted into luxury floating hotels with many standards and prices, river or canal cruising or both. There are also many famous waterways such as the Seine, Rhone, Rhine and Moselle to be explored.



Loire Valley

# Climate & Weather

Such a diverse landscape brings differing climatic conditions and weather patterns. Western areas of France have a cool climate, with minimum of 39°F and maximum of 65°F and moderate rainfall through-out the year. Brittany has more frequent rain as it juts out into the Atlantic, but it's not always the case. The lateral mid section of France is drier particularly in the summer months as is on the eastern side but with colder winters (min 35°F) and hotter summers (max 68°F) The south coast avoids the colder winters with a minimum of 45°F, due to the warming effect of The Mediterranean sea and has hot summers. Be aware of the three famous winds in the east and south-east; la Bise is a dry east wind which joins le Minstral in central Provence and la Tramontian which blows over the Massif Central. All the mountains have an alpine climate, being cold with plenty of rain and heavy snow in the winter.

## What to Pack

Pack according to the season. Layers in general are better for warmth rather than heavy items. Light breathable clothing for summer in all areas and waterproof winter gear for the mountains all year round. In winter, even in the Mediterranean, you will require a jacket for the evenings. A light waterproof windbreaker is always handy where-ever you go.



## Language & Useful Phrases

French is the official language spoken in France, while dialects are spoken in different regions. Basque is commonly spoken in the southwest, and Breton is spoken by some in Brittany. Most people can speak a little English, particularly in the main cities and tourist centers. You will find that if you try to speak some French, even if it's poorly, the locals will appreciate your efforts and respond in kind. Here are some common phrases that may help:



<b>One:</b>	un	<b>Hello:</b>	Bonjour
<b>Two:</b>	deux	<b>My name is:</b>	Salut, Je m'appelle ...
<b>Three:</b>	trois	<b>How are you?:</b>	Ca Va?
<b>Four:</b>	quatre	<b>Nice to meet you:</b>	Enchante
<b>Five:</b>	cinq	<b>Please:</b>	S'il vous plait
<b>Six:</b>	six	<b>Yes:</b>	Oui
<b>Seven:</b>	sept	<b>No:</b>	Non
<b>Eight:</b>	huit	<b>Goodbye:</b>	Au revoir
<b>Nine:</b>	neuf	<b>Thankyou:</b>	Merci
<b>Ten:</b>	dix	<b>I am lost.</b>	Je suis perdu.
		<b>Where is</b>	<b>Où se trouve</b>
		<b>the bathroom:</b>	<i>les toilettes</i>
		<b>the hotel:</b>	<i>l'hotel</i>
		<b>the restaurant:</b>	<i>le restaurant</i>
		<b>the airport</b>	<i>l'aéroport</i>

## Stay Healthy

The French health care system is one of the best in the world and the level of care in hospitals is of a very high quality. All hospitals have an emergency room that is open 24 hours a day. You will need to pay for your health care and contact your private insurance for reimbursement. In the event of hospitalization check with your insurer. Physicians and pharmacies are on call, but please be aware that home visits and consultations on Sundays and public holidays are always more expensive. If you need to see a doctor or go to a hospital, you will be given a signed 'feuille de soins' (a statement of the treatment carried out) and possibly an 'ordonnance' (a prescription); keep them in order to make a claim. To find a doctor, ask a local, enquire at a chemist, police station or dial 15 (SAMU - medical emergencies). There is a wide network of pharmacies and one is always open. If the one you are at is not it will display the address of the nearest one that is.

## Important Phone Num-

In case of emergency

SAMU: 15 (Medical emergencies)

Police: 17

Fire: 18

European: 112 (General)



Pyrenees

## Stay Safe

Statistically one of the safest countries in Europe, France is not dangerous and has a low crime rate. Pick-pocketing is the most prevalent crime affecting tourists so be vigilant with your personal effects, especially in crowded places such as trains, metro stations and popular tourist areas. Never leave your bags unattended, not only do you risk theft but they may be considered a security threat and can be destroyed by security officials. Late at night, especially when traveling alone avoid areas around metro stations or when the streets appear less crowded. Keep a low profile by not wearing highly visible jewelry or clothing that identify you as a member of a religious or political movement.

Police:

The Gendarmerie is a military institution in charge of public safety with police duties, they work with the police to enforce the law.

## Local Tourist

French Tourist Office Website:

[www.francetourism.com](http://www.francetourism.com)

## Public Holidays

2011

01 Jan New Year's Day  
22 Apr Good Friday  
24 Apr Easter Sunday  
25 Apr Easter Monday  
01 May Labor Day  
08 May WWII Victory Day  
02 Jun Ascension  
12 Jun Pentecost  
13 Jun Whit Monday  
14 Jul Bastille Day  
15 Aug Assumption of Mary  
01 Nov All Saints Day  
11 Nov Armistice Day  
25 Dec Christmas Day  
26 Dec 2nd day of Christmas

## Where to Get Help

US Embassy

4 Avenue Gabriel

Paris 75008 (Metro Concorde)

Tel: +33 1-43-12-22-22

Fax: +33 1-42-61-61-40

Email: [citizeninfo@state.gov](mailto:citizeninfo@state.gov)

2012

01 Jan New Year's Day  
02 Apr Good Friday  
08 Apr Easter Sunday  
09 Apr Easter Monday  
01 May Labor Day  
08 May WWII Victory Day  
17 May Ascension  
27 May Pentecost  
28 May Whit Monday  
14 Jul Bastille Day  
15 Aug Assumption of Virgin  
01 Nov All Saints Day  
11 Nov Armistice Day  
25 Dec Christmas Day  
26 Dec 2nd day of



# Key Facts on France

**Location:** Western Europe  
**Area:** 420,000 sq. miles  
**Capital:** Paris

**Largest City:** Paris followed by  
Marseille  
**Population:** 65 million

## Geography:

Metropolitan France covers 340 sq. miles having the largest area among the European Union members. Possessing a wide variety of landscapes, from coastal plains in the north and west to mountain ranges of the Alps in the south-east, the Massif Central in the south-central and the Pyrenees in the south-west. Reaching into the sky at 4,807 meters Mt Blanc is the highest peak in Western Europe. France has an extensive river system including the Loire, Garonne, Seine, Rhine and Rhone .

## Time Zone:

From the last Sunday in March until the last Sunday in October, French time goes from GMT+1 to GMT+2 (Greenwich Meridian Time). The period of Summer Time starts and one hour is added and then taken away at the end of October.

## Communications:

**Mobile Phones:** Make sure you get international roaming and see your provider for cost and conditions.

**Pay Phones:** You can make both domestic and international calls from any cabine t`el`ephonique (telephone booth) and can receive calls where there's a blue logo of a ringing bell. You will need a phone card as coin boxes have been mostly phased out, available from tobacco shops and newsstands, post offices and some metro stations. The cards go by units. 50 is EUR6 or 120 EUR15 and your remaining credit is displayed throughout the call. Don't forget to take your card with you when you are finished. Many call boxes will also accept credit cards, but this is expensive. Directory inquiries (tel 12 ) are free.

To call the USA from France dial 0011 33 then the area code and number. For example, within France calling Paris the area code is 01 and has 10 digits in total, outside of France drop the initial 0. Numbers beginning with 0800 are toll free, 0836 are premium rates apply. Rates are discounted on the weekend and at night after 7pm during the week.

**Internet:** Email is the cheapest and most hassle-free way of staying in touch with home. All reasonable sized towns have a cyber cafe or connection point of some sort, and in less populated areas the need is being filled by post offices which have rather expensive terminal operated with a prepaid card. In addition T`el`ecom have street side kiosks in major cities, but prices vary so shop around.

## Measurements

France uses the metric system of measurement:  
Temperature is measured in degrees Celsius (°C)

1 millimetre (mm) = 0.03937 inches	1 milligram (mg) = 0.0154 grain
1 centimetre (cm) = 0.3937 inches	1 gram (gm) = 0.0353 oz
1 metre (m) = 1.0936 yd	1 kilogram (kg) = 2.2046lb
1 kilometre (km) = 0.6214 mile	1 tonne (t) = 0.9842 ton

## Electricity

230 volts AC at 50 hz. You will need a plug adapter as they only have one type of plug with 2 round pins.

## Shopping hours

Monday to Saturday open 9.00am to midday then again at 2.00pm to 7.00pm. However, most department stores and out of town supermarkets do not close at midday.

## Smoking

Smoking in shops, offices and other public places has been banned since Feb. 2007, however a special exemption for bars and cafes was in place until Jan. 1, 2008

# France Money Matters

## Currency

The Euro is the local currency of France.

EURO (€)

Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5.

Coins are in denominations of €2 and €1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

## Currency Exchange

The best places to change cash in France is either at banks or post offices, where they offer the best rates of exchange. You can also exchange cash at the airport or Bureau de Change though the exchange rates may be more expensive.

## Banking Hours:

Banks are open in France Monday to Saturday 9.00am-12.00pm and 2pm - 5.00pm.

## ATMs

ATMs are readily available throughout France, and are available in cities and small towns across France. Look for the ATMs that show the Cirrus of Bankmate and the PLUS symbols as these will accept foreign debit cards.

## Credit Cards

Major credit cards are widely accepted across France, particularly Amex, Visa, Diners and Mastercard and can be used for most purchases, in hotels and restaurants. Use the following numbers to report lost or stolen credit cards:

Amex: 1 877 382 4357

Visa: 1800 VISA 911

Diners: 0810 314 159

## Traveller's Cheques

Traveller's cheques are still used in France, however they're being outdated by credit and debit cards. It's a good idea to have cheques made in large denominations to reduce commission charges. You may need a form of photo identification to cash traveller's cheques.

## Tax

Sales tax is called TVA which stands for Taxe sur la Valeur Ajoutée (Tax on Value Added) which is set to 19.6% applicable to most goods and services or 5.5% applicable to some goods and services

## Tipping

Restaurants in France directly include a 15 percent service charge in your bill, it is required by law as tips are assessed for taxation. Clearly itemized are the words 'service compris' (tip included) that will appear on your bill. The prices on the menu include tax and tip. However if you wish to show your appreciation to your particular waiter feel free to do so as they may not receive it otherwise. Taxi drivers don't get paid much and work hard so 5-10% of your fare is generous. It is customary to tip usherettes at the Opera house (couple of euro's) and at the movies but not much. One euro per bag is enough for your porter. If you take a guided tour at a museum you might leave one or two euros.



Vine route Motorway

Auto Europe hopes that you find the information in this guide helpful for your self drive holiday in France. This touring information has been created to be used as a guide only. Auto Europe is not liable for any misinformation, typographical errors, etc. related to the information contained in this guide.

auto  europe.

fly  international  
part of auto  europe. LLC