

FRANCE

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Abstract: France, officially French Republic, French France or République Française, country of northwestern Europe. Historically and culturally among the most important nations in the Western world, France has also played a highly significant role in international affairs, with former colonies in every corner of the globe. Bounded by the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, the Alps and the Pyrenees, France has long provided a geographic, economic, and linguistic bridge joining northern and southern Europe. It is Europe's most important agricultural producer and one of the world's leading industrial powers.

Keywords: régions, Capital, Flag, “city of light”, Tricolour, Encyclopædia Britannica, “ancient French colour”, Constitution, Bastille Day.

France is a country located primarily in Western Europe. It also includes overseas regions and territories in the Americas and the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans,[XII] giving it one of the largest discontinuous exclusive economic zones in the world. Its metropolitan area extends from the Rhine to the Atlantic Ocean and from the Mediterranean Sea to the English Channel and the North Sea; overseas territories include French Guiana in South America, Saint Pierre and Miquelon in the North Atlantic, the French West Indies, and many islands in Oceania and the Indian Ocean. Its eighteen integral regions (five of which are overseas) span a combined area of 643,801 km² (248,573 sq mi) and had a total population of over 68 million as of January 2023. France is a unitary semi-presidential republic with its capital in Paris, the country's largest city and main cultural and commercial centre; other major urban areas include Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, Lille, Bordeaux, Strasbourg and Nice.

France is among the globe's oldest nations, the product of an alliance of duchies and principalities under a single ruler in the Middle Ages. Today, as in that era, central authority is vested in the state, even though a measure of autonomy has been granted to the country's régions in recent decades. The French people look to the state as the primary guardian of liberty, and the state in turn provides a generous program of amenities for its citizens, from free education to health care and pension plans. Even so, this centralist tendency is often at odds with another long-standing theme of the French nation: the insistence on the supremacy of the individual. On this matter historian Jules Michelet remarked, “England is an empire, Germany is a nation, a race, France is a person.” Statesman Charles de Gaulle, too, famously complained, “Only peril can bring the French together. One can't impose unity out of the blue on a country that has 265 kinds of cheese.”

This tendency toward individualism joins with a pluralist outlook and a great interest in the larger world. Even though its imperialist stage was driven by the impulse to civilize that world according to French standards (*la mission civilisatrice*), the French still note approvingly the words of writer Gustave Flaubert:

“ I am no more modern than I am ancient, no more French than Chinese; and the idea of *la patrie*, the fatherland—that is, the obligation to live on a bit of earth coloured red or blue on a map, and to detest the other bits coloured green or black—has always seemed to me narrow, restricted, and ferociously stupid.”

Capital

The capital and by far the most important city of France is Paris, one of the world’s preeminent cultural and commercial centres. A majestic city known as the *ville lumière*, or “city of light,” Paris has often been remade, most famously in the mid-19th century under the command of Georges-Eugène, Baron Haussman, who was committed to Napoleon III’s vision of a modern city free of the choleric swamps and congested alleys of old, with broad avenues and a regular plan. Paris is now a sprawling metropolis, one of Europe’s largest conurbations, but its historic heart can still be traversed in an evening’s walk. Confident that their city stood at the very centre of the world, Parisians were once given to referring to their country as having two parts, Paris and *le désert*, the wasteland beyond it. Metropolitan Paris has now extended far beyond its ancient suburbs into the countryside, however, and nearly every French town and village now numbers a retiree or two driven from the city by the high cost of living, so that, in a sense, Paris has come to embrace the desert and the desert Paris.

Among France’s other major cities are Lyon, located along an ancient Rhône valley trade route linking the North Sea and the Mediterranean; Marseille, a multiethnic port on the Mediterranean founded as an *entrepôt* for Greek and Carthaginian traders in the 6th century BCE; Nantes, an industrial centre and deepwater harbour along the Atlantic coast; and Bordeaux, located in southwestern France along the Garonne River.

Flag

The national flag of France (French: *drapeau français*) is a tricolour featuring three vertical bands coloured blue (hoist side), white, and red. It is known to English speakers as the Tricolour (French: *Tricolore*), although the flag of Ireland and others are also so known. The design was adopted after the French Revolution, where the revolutionaries were influenced by the horizontally striped red-white-blue flag of the Netherlands.[2][3] While not the first tricolour, it became one of the most influential flags in history. The tricolour scheme was later adopted by many other nations in Europe and elsewhere, and, according to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* has historically stood “in symbolic opposition to the autocratic and clericalist royal standards of the past”.

Before the tricolour was adopted 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 colours. According to French general Gilbert du Motier,

Marquis de Lafayette, white was the “ancient French colour” and was added to the militia cockade to form a tricolour, or national, cockade of France.

This cockade became part of the uniform of the National Guard, which succeeded the militia and was commanded by Lafayette. The colours and design of the cockade are the basis of the Tricolour flag, adopted in 1790, originally with the red nearest to the flagpole and the blue farthest from it. 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 tricolour was brought back after the July Revolution and has been used since then, except for an interruption for a few days in 1848. Since 1976, there have been two versions of the flag in varying levels of use by the state: the original (identifiable by its use of navy blue) and one with a lighter shade of blue. Since 2020, France has used the older variant by default, including at the Élysée Palace.

Constitution

The current Constitution of France was adopted on 4 October 1958. It is typically called the Constitution of the Fifth Republic (French: Constitution de la Ve République), and it replaced the Constitution of the Fourth Republic of 1946 with the exception of the preamble per a Constitutional Council decision in July 1971.[1][dead link][2] The current Constitution regards the separation of church and state, democracy, social welfare, and indivisibility as core principles of the French state

Charles de Gaulle was the main driving force in introducing the new constitution and inaugurating the Fifth Republic, while the text was drafted by Michel Debré. Since then, the constitution has been amended twenty-four times, through 2008.

France National Day – 14th of July (2023 Update)

All about the 14th of July – France National Day (known as Bastille Day in English) and the main events in Paris (2023 update).

Bastille Day vs 14th of July

Bastille Day is a term invented by the Anglo-Saxons to define the French National Day. ‘Bastille Day,’ however, means nothing in France. If you ask your friends in France what they are doing on Bastille Day, they will look at you with big questioning eyes: ‘C’est quoi le Bastille Day?!’. Same, wishing a ‘Happy Bastille Day!’ has no sense in France.

In France, the French National Day is called La Fête Nationale, Le 14 Juillet (14th of July) or le Pont du 14 Juillet, if it means a long weekend in France.

For the average French, the 14th of July is not a big celebration like Christmas, Easter, or Independence Day in the US but of course, the 14th of July is a day off for us. For some, Le 14 Juillet means the beginning of the summer holidays while for others (me included) is a good opportunity to explore other places in France on a long weekend getaway while waiting for the summer holidays.

5 interesting facts about France

1. France Is The Most-Visited Country In The World

Of all the countries in the world, France is the most visited! Approximately 89 million people visit France every year to take in the culture and enjoy the food.

In addition to being the most visited country in the world, Paris is one of the most visited cities. In 2019, over 19 million tourists visited the city of Paris, France. It consistently ranks in the top 10 most visited cities year after year.

2. France Is Smaller Than Texas

If you want to imagine how big France is, a good comparison is that it is slightly smaller than the state of Texas! France has a ton of personality for such a small country.

While France isn't that big, it is the biggest country in the European Union. For a little more perspective, France is twice as big as the United Kingdom and eight times the size of Ireland.

3. France Has The Largest Art Museum

The Louvre Museum in Paris, France is the largest art museum in the world. This museum is so big that if you wanted to spend 30 seconds looking at each piece of art, it would take you approximately 100 days to get through the entire museum.

French artists created 66% of all the artwork in the museum. Here are some of the most famous pieces of artwork in the Louvre Museum:

- The Mona Lisa
- The Raft of the Medusa
- The Venus de Milo
- The Horse Tamers
- The Wedding at Cana

Before the Louvre Museum became a museum, it was a fortress built in the 12th century and then renovated into a royal palace in the 16th century. Many people claim that the Louvre Museum is haunted due to its age and complicated past.

4. The French Eat 25,000 Tons Of Snails Each Year

Did you know that in France over 25,000 tons of snails are eaten every single year? That is a lot of snails! On average, a resident of France eats approximately 500 snails per year. The French consider snails to be a delicacy and they are often enjoyed during holidays.

In France, snails are referred to as “escargot”. While there are several different types of escargot that you can eat, one of the most common ways to eat snails in France is cooked in butter and garlic. The best way to eat snails in France is to do so at a French restaurant. Snails are often eaten as an appetizer, and to eat them, your waiter should provide you with special utensils to help crack the shell.

5. France Produces Over 1,500 Types Of Cheese

While the exact number of cheeses produced in France is unknown, it is said that they make over 1,500 different cheeses! If you happen to love cheese, this may sound like a dream come true.

In fact, France ranks in the top ten countries for their amount of cheese consumption. More than 95% of the French population eats cheese. French cheeses have several defining characteristics such as how long they age, the process of making the cheese, and how moldy they are.

Here is a list of some of the most popular cheeses that you will find in France:

- Camembert de Normandie
- Brie de Meaux
- Reblochen

- Fromage Blanc
- Roqefort
- Munster

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