

The American's Guide to France

France is a medium-sized foreign country situated in the continent of Europe. It is an important member of the world community, though not nearly as important as it thinks. It is bounded by Germany, Spain, Switzerland and some smaller nations of no particular importance and with not very good shopping. France is a very old country with many treasures, such as the Louvre and Euro Disney.

Among its contributions to western civilization are champagne, Camembert cheese and the guillotine. Although France likes to think of itself as a modern nation, air conditioning is little used and it is next to impossible for Americans to get decent Mexican food.

One continuing exasperation for American visitors is that local people insist on speaking in French, though many will speak English if shouted at. Watch your money at all times.

THE PEOPLE

France has a population of 60 million people. 55 million of these drink and smoke (the other 5 million are small children). All French people drive like lunatics, are dangerously oversexed, and have no concept of standing patiently in line. The French people are in general gloomy, temperamental, proud, arrogant, aloof and undisciplined; those are their good points. Most French citizens are Roman Catholic, though you would hardly guess it from their behavior. Many people are communists.

Men sometimes have girls' names like Marie or Michel, and they kiss each other when they meet. American travelers are advised to travel in groups and wear baseball caps and colorful trousers for easier recognition.

SAFETY

In general, France is a safe destination, although travelers must be aware that from time to time it is invaded by Germany. Traditionally, the French surrender immediately. A tunnel connecting France to Britain beneath the English Channel has been opened in recent years to make it easier for the French government to flee to London during future German invasions, and for them to offload all their illegal immigrants.

HISTORY

Charlemagne discovered France in the Dark Ages. Other important historical figures are Louis XIV, the Huguenots, Joan of Arc, Jacques Cousteau and Charles de Gaulle, who was President for many years and is now an airport.

GOVERNMENT

The French form of government is democratic but noisy.

Parliament's principal occupation is setting off atomic bombs in the South Pacific and acting indignant and surprised when other countries complain.