

Country Profile: France

General Information:

- France is located in Western Europe.
- France also has overseas territories in North America, the Caribbean, South America, southern Indian Ocean, Pacific Ocean, and Antarctica.
- The government type in France is a republic, but in the territories, it varies from overseas department to overseas collectivity.
- The capital and the largest city is Paris.
- It is the largest country in the European Union and the second largest in Europe.
- France is one of the founding members of the European Union and the United Nations. It is also a member of the G8, NATO, Latin Union and Francophonie.
- The official currency is the Euro (EUR).
- The official language is French.
- Countries bordering France starting clockwise from the north is Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Monaco, Andorra, and Spain.
- Natural resources for France is fish, timber, coal, iron ore, bauxite, uranium, gypsum, zinc, arsenic, antimony, feldspar, potash, and fluorspar. In French Guiana it includes clay, tantalum, gold deposits, petroleum, kaolin, and niobium.
- Climate in France varies depending on region. The north and northeast has a temperate and continental climate. The west is oceanic and the south is Mediterranean.

Economy:

France is ranked as the sixth largest economy by its nominal GDP. Their economy is a combination of private enterprise and government intervention. Since the early 1990s the government has been loosening its control over several industries that includes electricity, railway, telecommunications, and aircraft firms.

Globally, France holds an important position as the third largest trader in the European Union after Germany and the United Kingdom. The country exports a number of valuable commodities including machinery and transportation equipment, aircraft, plastics, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, iron, steel, consumer products, petroleum and cars and vehicles. France is the second largest exporter in the world of both services and farm products. The country is also well known for its cheese, wine, and wheat, and is the world's leading supplier of these products.

Culture Etiquette:

Greetings:

To greet each another, men shake hands while maintaining eye contact. A hug might be included if they are good friends. Women greet each other with light kisses on the cheeks known as "bises." It is also acceptable to greet a man in this manner if he is a good friend. This is most common among family and friends too, but most of the times it is touching of the cheeks instead of actual kisses. It is considered rude to "faire des bises" if a person is ill. The number of kisses on the cheeks varies depending on the region. The first time a man and woman meet a handshake is acceptable. It is expected of the woman to offer her hand first.

(Continued on Page 2)

Country Profile: France (cont'd)

Communication Style:

Knowing a few words in French will help; since they are hesitant to speak English. The French are direct, but in a subtle manner. They will tell you the truth but politely.

Personal Space and Touching:

The appropriate length for personal space is an arm's length or closer. They are easy when it comes to maintaining personal space. Usually, at a first meeting the French are reserved, so touching during a conversation is unacceptable. During any meetings thereafter, touching is acceptable during conversation. It is a sign of affection.

Eye Contact:

Maintaining eye contact during handshake is crucial. It is considered rude when it is not established.

Views of Time:

Views of time vary by region in France. In Paris it is fast paced. While in Provence it is slower.

When a person is invited to dinner, being at least a half an hour late is expected. It is not appropriate to be late for a business meeting. Public transportation runs on time, but when union strikes occur, which is often, plan on walking to the destination.

Gender Issues:

Thirty years ago women were expected to stay at home and watch the children. Now it is acceptable for women to work.

Taboos:

Avoid putting feet up on chairs and tables. It is rude if you do not greet everybody in a large group. Making a fist with one hand and slapping the top of it with the other is a rude gesture.

Gestures:

There are countless gestures that are used on a daily basis.

Wiping the brow with one hand means "that's enough" or "I can't take it anymore." Turning your palm upwards and touching your thumb to your fingers means "I'm afraid." Making a fist, touching your nose like you are squeezing a clown nose and slightly turning it from side to side means "drunk" or "tipsy." Loosely grabbing your throat with one hand means "unbelievable" or "yeah right." The "Bof" or "Gallic Shrug" is done by raising the shoulders, holding up your hands, palms out and raising your eyebrows, which means "I don't know" or "It's not my fault." Tapping the side of your nose with your index finger usually means that one is clever or smart. To indicate that something is expensive, hold out your hands with their fingers and thumb touching, and rub the thumb across the fingertips.

Business Etiquette:

Dress:

In the city, men and women wear suits. Men wear conservative yet stylish suits with a shirt and tie. Women wear stylish business suits or dresses along with accessories.

Teachers and professors have a more casual style.

Titles and Business Cards:

Titles are important and people should be addressed appropriately. Monsieur is for Mister. Madame is for Mrs. and Mademoiselle is for Miss. You should wait and be invited to use the person's first name. There is no procedure for giving and accepting business cards, but the cards should be treated with respect.

(Continued on Page 3)

Country Profile: France (cont'd)

Meetings:

Punctuality is valued, so you should arrive on time when attending a business meeting. The meetings are not formal, but there is a structure, beginning and ending with small talk. It is best to wait and be told where to sit. The purpose of the meetings is to discuss the matter; not to make a final decision.

Negotiations:

Avoid confrontations. Remain cool and collective. The French review all the details before a final decision is made; therefore you should avoid rushing them or appearing impatient. Business in France is hierarchical; the individuals at the top of the company generally make decisions.

Gift Giving:

Gifts are not expected at the first meeting. When invited over for dinner or drinks, it is appropriate to bring over a bottle of high quality wine or a dessert. Gifts are opened when they are received.

Travel information:

You will not need a visa if your stay is shorter than 90 days, and you are travelling from these countries - Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Bermuda, Bolivia, Brunei, Bermuda, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Holy See, Honduras, Hong Kong, Japan, Macao, Malaysia, Mexico, Monaco, Nicaragua, New Zealand, Panama, Paraguay, San Marino, Singapore, South Korea, United States, and Uruguay. However, if your stay is longer than 90 days, a visa is required.

The following countries are not required to obtain a long stay visa - States of the European Union and European Economic Area, Switzerland, Monaco and Andorra. For working in France there are six visas, each with a different purpose. For more information about working visas please visit

http://www.immigration.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/immigrationprofessionnelle_etrangers_anglais.pdf. If France is your main destination, an application for a visa must be submitted to the French consular authority. If another Schengen country is your main destination, you must submit your application to the consular authority of that country. If the stays in the different Schengen countries are the same length, the country where you first enter the Schengen area is the one with the power to issue your visa. The list of Schengen area member states is located here

http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france_159/coming-to-france_2045/getting-visa_2046/list-of-schengen-area-member-states_10885.html. This is also a site in which French authorities has the power to receive visa applications

<http://www.mfe.org/default.aspx?SID=12291>.

Sources:

<http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/fr.html>

http://www.hlbi.com/dbifiles/dbi_pdf/DBI%20France%20A4.pdf

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