

Trip Notes: France

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

A valid US passport with at least **three months beyond your planned date of departure from the Schengen Area** is required. (We recommend six months for flexibility.) A visa is **not required** for US citizens visiting France or other Schengen countries for stays of **up to 90 days within a 180-day period**.

Entry/Exit System (EES):

EES will start operations on **12 October 2025**, with gradual introduction at EU external borders. Full implementation expected by **10 April 2026**. Until then, passports will continue to be manually stamped.

ETIAS (European Travel Information and Authorization System):

Expected to launch in **late 2026** for visa-free travelers (ages 18–70). Required for entry into **30 European countries**, including France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece. Cost: about **€20**, valid for 3 years or until your passport expires. Application completed online prior to travel.

Schengen Area countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland.

UK (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland): Requires a separate ETA for visits up to 6 months. Cost: £16 [Apply here](#).

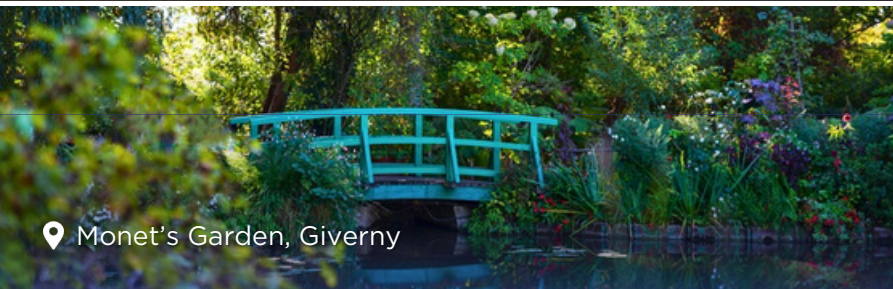
CURRENCY & CREDIT CARDS

The official currency is the **Euro (€)**.

- Major credit cards are widely accepted in hotels, shops, and restaurants; smaller cafés may prefer cash.
- Notify your bank of travel dates to avoid fraud alerts.
- ATMs (“distributeurs”) are common, but fees and limits may apply.
- A credit card is typically required for hotel check-in and car rentals.



📍 Château de Chambord, Loire Valley



📍 Monet's Garden, Giverny



📍 Hall of Mirrors, Versailles

INTERNATIONAL LUGGAGE ALLOWANCE

Varies by airline on both international and intra-European flights. Check baggage limits and fees before departure.

Reference: FAA Pack Safe: Dangerous Goods.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Dial 112 for police, ambulance, or fire.

PHONES & INTERNET

- To dial France from the US: 011 + 33 + local number (drop leading 0).
- To dial the US from France: 00 + 1 + area code + number.
- SIM/eSIM options: Orange, SFR, Bouygues Telecom, Free Mobile.
- Wi-Fi widely available in hotels, cafés, and train stations.

HOTELS

- Standard check-in: **3-4PM**
- Check-out: **11AM-12PM**
- Early check-in/late check-out may be available on request.

TIPPING

Service is usually included in restaurant bills (*service compris*).

- **Restaurants:** Rounding up or leaving 5-10% is appreciated for excellent service.
- **Taxis:** Round up to the nearest euro.
- **Hotels:** €1-2 per bag for porters, €2-5 per night for housekeeping.

FOOD & WINE

France is a world capital for cuisine and wine, with strong regional traditions.

- Legal drinking age: 18.
- Meals are typically long and multi-course, with an emphasis on fresh bread, cheese, and wine.
- Coffee: Espresso is the standard; café au lait is for breakfast.

SHOPPING & VAT

- Typical hours: 9AM-7PM; closed Sundays outside tourist areas.
- France's VAT is **20%**. Non-EU visitors can claim refunds on purchases **over €100** per store (within 3 months). Refund desks are at airports and some train stations.



Popular Souvenirs

- **French wine & champagne**
- **Gourmet foods:** macarons, Dijon mustard, foie gras, lavender products (Provence)
- **Perfume & cosmetics** (Paris, Grasse)
- **Fashion & accessories** from Paris boutiques
- **Antiques and regional crafts**

TIME

France is on **Central European Time (CET):** GMT +1 (GMT +2 during Daylight Saving).

LANGUAGE

The official language is **French**. English is widely spoken in tourist areas, but basics are appreciated.

Common Phrases

- Hello - *Bonjour*
- Goodbye - *Au revoir*
- Thank you - *Merci*
- Please - *S'il vous plaît*
- Excuse me - *Excusez-moi*
- Do you speak English? - *Parlez-vous anglais?*

ETIQUETTE

- **Greetings:** A light handshake is common; among friends, kisses on both cheeks (*la bise*).
- **Dining:** Keep hands visible (not on lap). Bread placed on the table, not plate. Say *bon appétit*.
- **Dress:** Fashionable yet understated. Casual attire is fine but avoid overly sporty looks in upscale settings.
- **Punctuality:** Arrive on time for reservations and tours.

CLIMATE

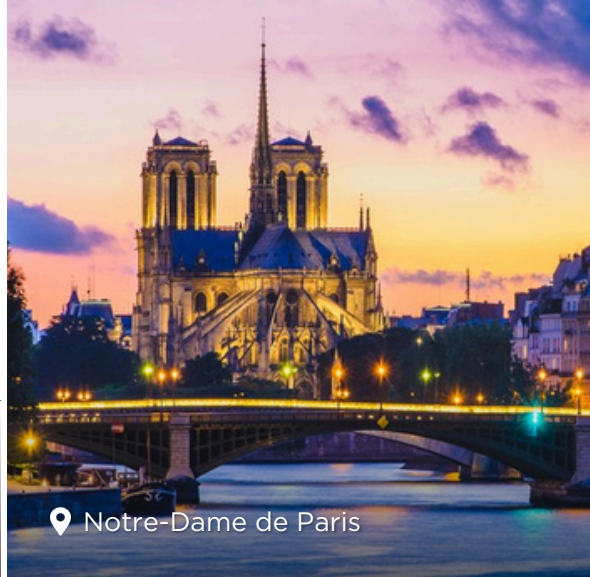
- **North/Paris:** Cool winters, mild summers.
- **South (Provence, Riviera):** Mediterranean climate, hot summers.
- **Alps:** Cold, snowy winters, ideal for skiing.

POWER

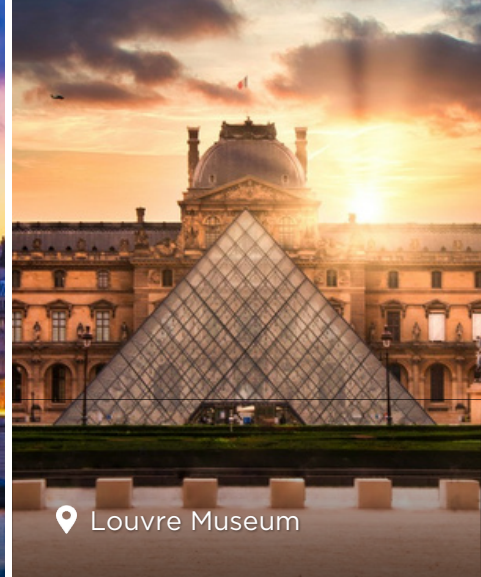
Electricity is **230V, 50Hz**. France uses **Type C and E plugs**. Bring a universal adapter.



📍 Arc de Triomphe, Paris



📍 Notre-Dame de Paris



📍 Louvre Museum

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

- 1 January – **New Year's Day**
- Easter Monday (date varies)**
- 1 May – **Labor Day**
- 8 May – **Victory in Europe Day**
- Ascension Day (date varies)**
- Whit Monday (date varies)**
- 14 July – **Bastille Day**
- 15 August – **Assumption Day**
- 1 November – **All Saints' Day**
- 11 November – **Armistice Day**
- 25 December – **Christmas Day**

DRIVING

- Drive on the **right-hand side**.
- **Speed limits:** 50 km/h (31 mph) in towns, 80-90 km/h (50-56 mph) on rural roads, 130 km/h (81 mph) on highways.
- Seat belts are mandatory.
- Handheld phone use prohibited.
- US license + **International Driving Permit (IDP)** required.
- Toll roads (*péages*) common.

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

US State Department Travel Advisories

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html>

US Embassy Paris

<https://www.usembassy.gov/france>

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

<https://step.state.gov>

US Passports

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html>

International Travel Guidance

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>