









Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité

Île-de-France, literally "Isle of France," is the home of the national capital, Paris, and is at once the most populous and one of the smallest regions. It is almost completely covered by the Paris metropolitan area. Its neighboring regions are less densely populated and allow for agriculture. Inhabited since prehistoric times, the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region has always been a strategic (and hence one of the most fought-over) regions in Europe. French President Charles de Gaulle, who was born in Lille, called the region a "fatal avenue" through which invading armies repeatedly passed. Normandie is famous for the Invasion of Normandy during World War II. Picardy has a strong and proud cultural identity, including extraordinary Gothic churches, distinctive local cuising and beer, and traditional sports such as longue paume, which is the ancestor of tennis.

Gastronomy: Some of the most famous foods from this region include baquettes, croissants, and Camem-

Normandie, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Picardie, and Ile-de-France

bert, Neufchatel, and Boursin cheeses. Economy: Apple orchards in Normandie are a major History: The area around Paris was the original personal domain of source of crops, and provide for the famous Calvados apple brandy. Seafood is also abundant along the king of France. Picardie the northern coast. is the birthplace of Gothic architecture, Nord-Pas-de-Calais housing six of world's greatest Haute-Normandie examples o Picardie Gothic cathedrals. Basse-Normandie North

English Channel

Bordeaux

Mediterranean

Climate

Farmland

Regional Beverages

Atlantic Ocean

Alsace, Lorraine, Champagne, Bourgogne and Franche-Comté

Eastern France, because it borders Germany and Switzerland, takes on a similar gastronomic landscape. Cabbage and sausage, as well as pretzels are common faire, and Lorraine is known for its traditional potato dishes. Having been early and always densely populated, Alsace is famous for its high number of picturesque villages. Nestled among the Vosges and Jura Mountains, the soil is perfect for growing grapes. Accordingly, Champagne is produced in its namesake region, while beer and wine are produced closer to the German border, especially Burgundy in its own namesake region. Franche-Comté, meanwhile, is France's first destination for cross-country skiing and other outdoor activities. Storks are a common sight in this region as well.

> Gastronomy: Franche-Comté is known for its "vin jaune," or "yellow wine," and other delights from the region include heartier dishes which include potato, cabbage, sausage, and breads. **Economy**: Wine and Dijon mustard from the Bourgogne region are exported across the world. **History**: The city of Reims is the site of every former

king of France's coronation. The Cathédrale de Nôtre Dame de Reims where the coronations took place was retrofitted in 2011 with stained glass by modern artist Marc Chagall.

East

Bourgogne

Bretagne, Loire, Centre, and Poitou-Charentes Brittany occupies the northwest peninsula of continental Europe in northwest France. It is bordered by Bretagne the English Channel to the north, the Celtic Sea and the Pays de la Loire کہ Centre Atlantic Ocean to the west, and the Bay of Biscay to the south. Brittany has a history of war between France and Britain. In terms of climate, Brittany lies within the north temperate zone. It has a changeable, Separates Poitou-Charentes maritime climate, similar to Cornwall. Further inland, in the Loire Valley, The climate is favorable most of West the year. Centre, like the Midi-Pyrénées, was named by the central government purely on the basis of geography, as the region is composed of too many historical provinces to use a single historical name. Gastronomy: Carrots, beans, and melons grow in abundance in the fertile Valley of the Loire, and are often paired with beef, veal and lamb. Of the most famous

food and drink, Poitou-Charentes is known for Cognac, a mellow, warming brandy. The most famous brand names include Courvoisier, Hennessy, and Remy Martin. **Economy**: The coast offers up a strong economy in seafood, while in Centre, efforts are being made to invite agribusiness and finance.

History: The architectural heritage in the valley's historic towns is notable, especially its châteaux, such as the Château d'Amboise, Chambord, Chinon, du Rivau, Ussé, Villandry and Chenonceau. The châteaux, numbering more than three hundred, represent a nation of builders starting with the necessary castle fortifications in the 10th century to the splendor of those built half a millennium later. In Brittany, the enchanted Forêt de Brocéliande is famous for its legendary figures of King Arthur, Guinevere, and the Lady of the Lake.

Germany Limousin, with a slowly rising population of less than a million, is the least populous region in Strasbourg France. It is essentially a rural region. Famed for some of the best beef farming in the world, herds of Limousin cattle—a distinctive chestnut red—are a common sight in the region. The region is also a major timber producing area. The regional capital, Limoges, was once an industrial power base, world-renowned for its porcelain and still a leader and innovator in electric equipment Orleans factories (which originally used porcelain as an insulator). However, large factories are now few in number. Its neighbor, Auvergne, is known for its mountain ranges and dormant volcanoes, and is made into a number and Switzerland

Belgium

located on the plateau Massif Central. The Puy de Dôme is the tallest volcano in the region with an altitude of 1,465 m. "Green" Tourism is now becoming an important draw for these regions. Gastronomy: Cows are much in evidence and are used both for meat and for milk, which is

of well-known cheeses: Bleu d'Auvergne, Cantal, Fourme d'Ambert Saint-Nectaire. **Economy:** The region is predominantly agricultural with tourism slowly becoming more important. Owing to its natural resources, including rubber, Michelin tires are produced there.

Limousin & Auvergne

History: Auvergne has been settled by humans since 10,000 B.C, but around 3000 B.C. the Celts and Arverni, whom the region was named after, settled Auvergne. The leader of the Arveni was the famed Vercingetorix who defended Gallic independence against the Romans.

Languedoc, Rhône-Alps, and Provence

Languedoc is a significant producer of wine, and a major contributor to

third of the grapes in France, and is a focus for outside investors. Wines

from the Mediterranean coast of Languedoc are labeled as Languedoc,

Limoux to the west – and Côtes du Rhône towards east. In Rhône-Alps,

The most famous of these regions is Provence, which has the quintes-

sential Mediterranean climate. Sun and sand draw many throughout the

the surplus known as the "wine lake". Today it produces more than a

those from the interior have other labels such as Fronton, Gaillac, or

the highest peak is Mont Blanc, on the French-Italian border.

Aquitaine & Midi-Pyrénées

There are traces of human settlement by prehistoric Southwest peoples, especially in the Périgord, but the earliest attested inhabitants in the south-west were the Aquitani, who were not proper Celtic people, but more akin to the Iberians. Though French is the official language of all regions, many residents also have some knowledge of Aquitaine /lidi-Pyrénées Basque or a dialect of Occitan, specifically Gascon. In Dordogne, the paintings of early humans were found in the famous caves at The Midi-Pyrénées region has no historical or geographical unity. The name chosen for

the new region was decided by the French government without reference to the historical provinces. The historical Midi-Pyrénées is even more complex, as the provinces listed here are further subdivided into pays (literally "countries"), with each their peculiarities and particular identities. Gastronomy: Seafood, including oysters, is abundant on the Atlantic coast, but moving inland,

the primary livestock is duck or goose. Foie gras, confit de canard (duck confit), and other classic dishes hail from the region of Aquitaine. In Midi-Pyrénées, mountain cheese, goat and sheep cheese, truffles, and walnut oil flavor typically spicy, Spanish influenced dishes. **Economy**: Aquitaine is home to many successful sports teams, inclusing FC Girondins de Bordeaux, one of France's most successful association football teams. Bull fighting is also popular in the region, and major surfing championships regularly take place on Aquitaine's coast. In Midi-Pyrénées, farms, food industry, and service are the primary drivers of the region's economy, and many sheep and goat herding families live a rugged mountain existence.

History: Lascaux is the setting of caves famous for their Paleolithic cave paintings, which are estimated to be 17,300 years old. They primarily consist of images of large animals, most of which are known from fossil evidence to have lived in the area at the time. In 1979, Lascaux was added to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list along with other prehistoric sites in the Vézère valley.

Montpellie Marseille Côte d'Azur Spain La Corse Mediterranean Sea Physical Features Regional Gastronomy Attractions and History & Environment South Rhône-Alpes

Cabbage

Mustard

Chaîne des Puys

year. The Vaucluse is the meeting point of three of the four different climatic zones of France; it has a Mediterranean climate in the south, an alpine climate in the northeast, around the mountains of Vaucluse and the massif of the Baronnies; and a continental climate in the northwest. The close proximity of these three different climates tends to moderate all of them, and the Mediterranean climate usually prevails. Provence has a special place in the history of the motion picture – one of the first projected motion pictures, a fifty-second silent film, was shown to an audience in Paris on 28 December 1895, causing a sensation. **Gastronomy**: The Mediterranean climate has shaped the Mediterranean cuisine. Classic dishes have sprung from the region, including Salade Niçoise, Bouillabaisse, and ratatouille, but one also finds olive tapenade, sun-ripened vegetables, and fresh seafood. Fresh herbs and olive oil are the basics for each meal. **Economy**: Aerospace, electronics, and bio-tech industries abound in Toulouse as well as high-tech, electronics, and computer industries. Despite the favorable environment for industry, services are the largest sector of the economy in the region. In Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur Rhône-Alps, tourism is key. The region is a major European transit hub, linking northern France and Europe to the Mediterranean area. Millions travel along its motorways in summertime from Paris to holidays at the sea. There are international airports at Lyon, Grenoble and Saint-Étienne and many other minor airports and airfields. anguedoc-Roussillor The region is also a transport hub for the rail-network with the TGV running

Limousin

Central

through Lyon from Paris and the north, to the Mediterranean. History: Rhône-Alpes region has hosted the Winter Olympics three times; in 1924 at Chamonix, 1968 at Grenoble, and 1992 at Albertville. Annecy tried to be 4th city, but it failed. Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) lived little more than two years in Provence, but his fame as a painter is largely a result of what he painted there. Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) spent each summer from 1919 to 1939 on the Côte d'Azur, and moved there permanently in 1946, first at Vallauris, then at Mougins, where he spent his last years.

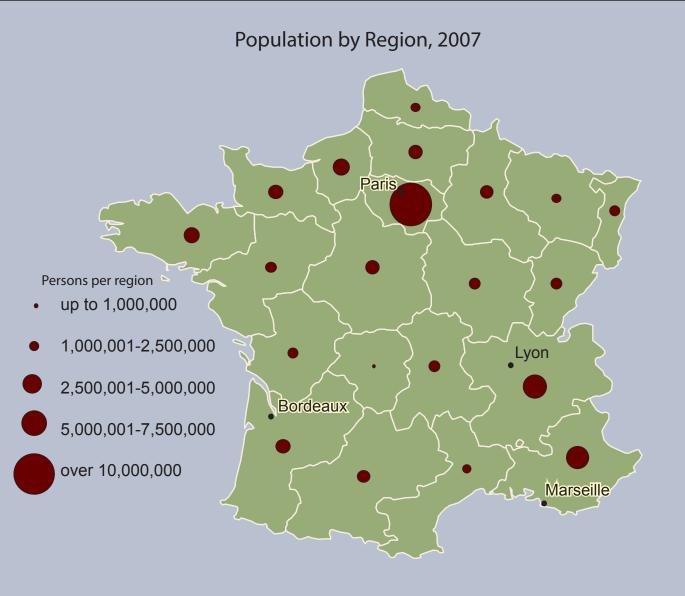


France was formerly divided into provinces based on common traditions, languages, and ways of life. However, During the early years of the French Revolution, in an attempt to centralize the administration of the whole country, and to remove the influence of the French nobility over the country, the entirety of the Province system was abolished and replaced by the system of départements, which is still in use today.

Topography

Brocéliande Forest

France has a unique topography, beginning with its abundance of mountain chains. The Vosges, Jura, Alps, and Pyrénées are the major ones, but a surprise awaits in central France. Dormant volcanoes dot the plateau known as the Massif Central. Many fertile valleys have been carved out from the numerous rivers that flow into the surrounding water. The major bodies of water surrounding France include: The Atlantic Ocean, English Channel, Mediterranean Sea, and Lac Léman (Lake Geneva), which the country shares with Switzerland.



Sources Wikipedia.com; Discover Poitou-Charentes; Regions of France; USA Today Travel Tips

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