

# Traveling to France



## About your destination

France (French: [fs]), officially the French Republic (French: République française [epyblik fsz]), is a unitary sovereign state comprising territory in western Europe and several overseas regions and territories. The European part of France, called metropolitan France, extends from the Mediterranean Sea to the English Channel and the North Sea, and from the Rhine to the Atlantic Ocean. France spans 643,801 square kilometres (248,573 sq mi) and has a total population of 66.6 million. It is a unitary semi-presidential republic with the capital in Paris, the country's largest city and main cultural and commercial centre. The Constitution of France establishes the state as secular and democratic, with its sovereignty derived from the people.

During the Iron Age, what is now Metropolitan France was inhabited by the Gauls, a Celtic people. The Gauls were conquered in 51 BC by the Roman Empire, which held Gaul until 486. The Gallo-Romans were superseded by the Germanic Franks, who formed the medieval Kingdom of France. France emerged as a major European power in the Late Middle Ages, with its victory in the Hundred Years' War (1337 to 1453) strengthening state-building and the political centralization. During the Renaissance, France experienced a vast cultural development and established the beginning of a global colonial empire. The 16th century was dominated by religious civil wars between Catholics and Protestants (Huguenots).