**[Brief Summary of French History (thoughtco.com)](https://www.thoughtco.com/france-a-historical-profile-1221301)**

Country Profile

The French Republic, is a country located primarily in [Western Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Europe). It also includes [overseas regions and territories](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overseas_France) in the [Americas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Americas) and the [Atlantic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_Ocean), [Pacific](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Ocean), and [Indian Oceans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Ocean), giving it [one of the largest discontiguous exclusive economic zones in the world](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exclusive_economic_zone_of_France). [Metropolitan France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolitan_France) shares borders with [Belgium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgium) and [Luxembourg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luxembourg) to the north, [Germany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germany) to the northeast, [Switzerland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Switzerland) to the east, [Italy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy) and [Monaco](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monaco) to the southeast, [Andorra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andorra) and [Spain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spain) to the south, and a maritime border with the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) to the northwest. Its metropolitan area extends from the [Rhine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhine) to the [Atlantic Ocean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_Ocean) and from the [Mediterranean Sea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mediterranean_Sea) to the [English Channel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Channel) and the [North Sea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Sea). Its overseas territories include [French Guiana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Guiana) in [South America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_America), [Saint Pierre and Miquelon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Pierre_and_Miquelon) in the North Atlantic, the [French West Indies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_West_Indies), and many islands in [Oceania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oceania) and the [Indian Ocean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Ocean). Its [eighteen integral regions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regions_of_France) (five of which are overseas) span a combined area of 643,801 km2 (248,573 sq mi) and have a total population of 68.4 million as of January 2024. France is a [semi-presidential republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semi-presidential_system) with its capital in [Paris](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris), the [country's largest city](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_communes_in_France_with_over_20,000_inhabitants) and main cultural and commercial centre.

History

The country of France emerged from the fragmentation of the larger [Carolingian empire](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-made-charles-so-great-1788566), when Hugh Capet became King of West Francia in 987. This kingdom consolidated power and expanded territorially, becoming known as “France.” Early wars were fought over land with English monarchs, including the [Hundred Years War](https://www.thoughtco.com/the-hundred-years-war-an-overview-2360737), then against the Habsburgs, especially after the latter inherited Spain and appeared to surround France. At one point France was closely associated with the Avignon Papacy, and experienced wars of religion after the Reformation between a twisting combination of Catholic and Protestant. French royal power reached its peak with the reign of Louis XIV (1642–1715), known as the Sun King, and French culture dominated Europe.

Royal power collapsed fairly quickly after the financial excesses of Louis XIV and within a century France experienced the French Revolution, which began in 1789, overthrew the still-lavish spending [Louis XVI](https://www.thoughtco.com/king-louis-xvi-of-france-4119769) (1754–1793) and established a republic. France now found itself fighting wars and exporting its world-changing events across Europe.

The French Revolution was soon eclipsed by the imperial ambitions of [Napoleon Bonaparte](https://www.thoughtco.com/napoleon-bonaparte-biography-1221106) (1769–1821), and the ensuing Napoleonic Wars saw France first militarily dominate Europe, then be defeated. The monarchy was restored, but instability followed and a second republic, second empire and third republic followed in the nineteenth century. The early twentieth century was marked by two German invasions, in 1914 and 1940, and a return to a democratic republic after liberation. France is currently in its Fifth Republic, established in 1959 during upheavals in society.

Culture

French culture is most commonly associated with Paris, which is a center of fashion, cuisine, art and architecture, but life outside of the City of Lights is very different and varies by region.

France doesn't just have culture; the word "culture" is actually French. "'Culture' derives from the same French term, which in turn derives from the Latin 'colere,' meaning to tend to the earth and grow, cultivate and nurture," Cristina De Rossi, an anthropologist at Barnet and Southgate College in London, told Live Science.

Historically, French culture was influenced by Celtic and Gallo-Roman cultures as well as the Franks, a Germanic tribe. France was initially defined as the western area of Germany known as Rhineland but it later came to refer to a territory that was known as Gaul during the Iron Age and [Ancient Roman](https://www.livescience.com/ancient-rome) era.

In the centuries that followed it was the home of some of the most powerful royal families of the medieval and early modern period and went on to be the center of the [Enlightenment](https://www.livescience.com/55327-the-enlightenment.html) with the [French Revolution](https://www.livescience.com/how-many-french-revolutions.html). The rise of [Napoleon](https://www.livescience.com/napoleon-bonaparte.html) saw French influence spread through Europe and beyond, becoming one of the major world powers through the 19th and 20th centuries, at the heart of the First and Second World Wars, all of which has shaped the France we know today.

Tourist attraction

Loire valley

The Loire Valley ([French](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_language): Vallée de la Loire, pronounced [[vale də la lwaʁ]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/French)), spanning 280 kilometres (170 mi), is a [valley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valley) located in the middle stretch of the [Loire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loire) river in central [France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France), in both the administrative regions [Pays de la Loire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pays_de_la_Loire) and [Centre-Val de Loire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centre-Val_de_Loire). The area of the Loire Valley comprises about 800 square kilometres (310 sq mi). It is referred to as the Cradle of the French and the Garden of France due to the abundance of [vineyards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vineyard), fruit orchards (such as [cherries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cherry)), and [artichoke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artichoke), and [asparagus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asparagus) fields, which line the banks of the river. Notable for its historic towns, architecture, and wines, the valley has been inhabited since the [Middle Palaeolithic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Palaeolithic) period. In 2000, [UNESCO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNESCO) added the central part of the Loire River valley to its list of [World Heritage Sites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_Sites).

The Château de Chenonceau

It is a French [château](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C3%A2teau) spanning the river [Cher](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cher_(river)), near the small village of [Chenonceaux](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chenonceaux" \o "Chenonceaux), [Indre-et-Loire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indre-et-Loire), [Centre-Val de Loire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centre-Val_de_Loire).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C3%A2teau_de_Chenonceau#cite_note-1) It is one of the best-known [châteaux of the Loire Valley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C3%A2teaux_of_the_Loire_Valley).[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C3%A2teau_de_Chenonceau#cite_note-2)

The estate of Chenonceau is first mentioned in writing in the 11th century.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C3%A2teau_de_Chenonceau#cite_note-Novak164-3) The current château was built in 1514–1522 on the foundations of an old mill and was later extended to span the river. The bridge over the river was built (1556–1559) to designs by the French Renaissance architect [Philibert de l'Orme](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philibert_de_l%27Orme), and the [gallery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_gallery) on the bridge, built from 1570 to 1576 to designs by [Jean Bullan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Bullant)

Useful information