[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Pp-semi](/wiki/Template:Pp-semi) [Template:Pp-move-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-move-indef) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Use British English](/wiki/Template:Use_British_English) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country)

**France** ([French](/wiki/French_language): [Template:IPA-fr](/wiki/Template:IPA-fr)), officially the **French Republic** ([Template:Lang-fr](/wiki/Template:Lang-fr) [Template:IPA-fr](/wiki/Template:IPA-fr)), is a [sovereign state](/wiki/Sovereign_state) comprising territory in [western Europe](/wiki/Western_Europe) and several [overseas regions and territories](/wiki/Overseas_departments_and_territories_of_France).[Template:Efn-ur](/wiki/Template:Efn-ur) The [European](/wiki/Europe), or [metropolitan](/wiki/Metropolitan_France), area of France extends from the [Mediterranean Sea](/wiki/Mediterranean_Sea) to the [English Channel](/wiki/English_Channel) and the [North Sea](/wiki/North_Sea), and from the [Rhine](/wiki/Rhine) to the [Atlantic Ocean](/wiki/Atlantic_Ocean). France spans [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert)<ref name=areafactbook/> and has a total population of 66.7 million.[Template:Efn-ur](/wiki/Template:Efn-ur)<ref name=populationINSEE>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> It is a [unitary](/wiki/Unitary_state) [semi-presidential](/wiki/Semi-presidential_system) [republic](/wiki/Republic) with the [capital](/wiki/Capital_city) in [Paris](/wiki/Paris), the country's largest city and main cultural and commercial centre.

During the [Iron Age](/wiki/Iron_Age), what is now Metropolitan France was inhabited by the [Gauls](/wiki/Gaul), a [Celtic](/wiki/Celts) people. The area was annexed in 51 BC by the [Roman Empire](/wiki/Roman_Empire), which held Gaul until 486, when the [Germanic](/wiki/Germanic_peoples) [Franks](/wiki/Franks) conquered the region and formed the [Kingdom of France](/wiki/Kingdom_of_France). France emerged as a major European power in the [Late Middle Ages](/wiki/Late_Middle_Ages), with its victory in the [Hundred Years' War](/wiki/Hundred_Years'_War) (1337 to 1453) strengthening [state-building](/wiki/State-building) and [political centralization](/wiki/Unitary_state). During the [Renaissance](/wiki/French_Renaissance), French culture flourished and a [global colonial empire](/wiki/French_colonial_empire) was established, which by the 20th century would be the second largest in the world.[[1]](#cite_note-1) The 16th century was dominated by [religious civil wars](/wiki/French_Wars_of_Religion) between [Catholics](/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church) and [Protestants](/wiki/Protestantism) ([Huguenots](/wiki/Huguenot)).

France became Europe's dominant cultural, political, and military power under [Louis XIV](/wiki/Louis_XIV).[[2]](#cite_note-2) In the late 18th century, the [French Revolution](/wiki/French_Revolution) overthrew the [absolute monarchy](/wiki/Absolute_monarchy), established one of modern history's earliest [republics](/wiki/French_First_Republic), and saw the drafting of the [*Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*](/wiki/Declaration_of_the_Rights_of_Man_and_of_the_Citizen), which expresses the nation's ideals to this day. [Napoleon](/wiki/Napoleon_Bonaparte) took power and launched the [First French Empire](/wiki/First_French_Empire), whose subsequent [Napoleonic Wars](/wiki/Napoleonic_Wars) shaped the course of continental Europe. Following the collapse of the Empire, France endured a tumultuous succession of governments culminating with the establishment of the [French Third Republic](/wiki/French_Third_Republic) in 1870.

France was a [major participant](/wiki/Triple_Entente) in the [First World War](/wiki/First_World_War), from which it [emerged victorious](/wiki/Treaty_of_Versailles_(1919)), and was one of the [Allied Powers](/wiki/Allies_of_World_War_II) in the [Second World War](/wiki/Second_World_War), but came under [occupation](/wiki/German_military_administration_in_occupied_France_during_World_War_II) by the [Axis Powers](/wiki/Axis_Powers) in 1940. Following [liberation](/wiki/Liberation_of_France) in 1944, a [Fourth Republic](/wiki/French_Fourth_Republic) was established and later dissolved in the course of the [Algerian War](/wiki/Algerian_War). The [Fifth Republic](/wiki/French_Fifth_Republic), led by [Charles de Gaulle](/wiki/Charles_de_Gaulle), was formed in 1958 and remains to this day. Algeria and the colonies in Indochina became independent in the 1950s after long, bloody wars. Nearly all the other colonies became independent in the 1960s with minimal controversy and typically retained close economic and military connections with France.

France has long been a global center of [art](/wiki/List_of_French_artists_and_artistic_movements), [science](/wiki/List_of_French_scientists), and [philosophy](/wiki/List_of_French_philosophers). It hosts Europe's [third-largest](/wiki/List_of_World_Heritage_Sites_in_France) number of cultural [UNESCO World Heritage Sites](/wiki/UNESCO_World_Heritage_Sites) (after [Italy](/wiki/Italy) and [Spain](/wiki/Spain)) and receives around 83 million foreign tourists annually, the most of any country in the world.[[3]](#cite_note-3) France is a [developed country](/wiki/Developed_country) with the world's [sixth-largest economy](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)) by [nominal GDP](/wiki/Nominal_GDP)[[4]](#cite_note-4) and [ninth-largest](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)) by [purchasing power parity](/wiki/Purchasing_power_parity).[[5]](#cite_note-5) In terms of aggregate household wealth, it ranks fourth in the world.[[6]](#cite_note-6) France performs well in [international rankings](/wiki/International_rankings_of_France) of [education](/wiki/Education_Index), [health care](/wiki/Health_care_in_France), [life expectancy](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_life_expectancy), and [human development](/wiki/Human_Development_Index).[[7]](#cite_note-7)[[8]](#cite_note-8) France remains a [great power](/wiki/Great_power) in the world,[[9]](#cite_note-9) being a founding member of the [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations), where it serves as one of the five [permanent members of the UN Security Council](/wiki/Permanent_members_of_the_United_Nations_Security_Council), and a [founding](/wiki/Inner_six) and [leading](/wiki/Big_Four_(European_Union)) [member state of the European Union](/wiki/Member_state_of_the_European_Union) (EU).[[10]](#cite_note-10) It is also a member of the [Group of 7](/wiki/G7), [North Atlantic Treaty Organization](/wiki/NATO) (NATO), [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development) (OECD), the [World Trade Organization](/wiki/World_Trade_Organization) (WTO), and [La Francophonie](/wiki/Organisation_internationale_de_la_Francophonie).

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## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

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Originally applied to the whole [Frankish Empire](/wiki/Empire_of_the_Franks), the name "France" comes from the [Latin](/wiki/Latin) [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang), or "country of the [Franks](/wiki/Franks)".[[11]](#cite_note-11) Modern France is still named today *Francia* in Italian and Spanish, *Frankreich* in German and *Frankrijk* in Dutch, all of which have the same historical meaning.

There are various theories as to the origin of the name Frank. Following the precedents of [Edward Gibbon](/wiki/Edward_Gibbon) and [Jacob Grimm](/wiki/Jacob_Grimm),[[12]](#cite_note-12) the name of the Franks has been linked with the word *frank* (*free*) in English.[[13]](#cite_note-13) It has been suggested that the meaning of "free" was adopted because, after the conquest of Gaul, only Franks were free of taxation.[[14]](#cite_note-14) Another theory is that it is derived from the [Proto-Germanic](/wiki/Proto-Germanic_language) word *frankon*, which translates as *javelin* or *lance* as the throwing axe of the Franks was known as a [francisca](/wiki/Francisca).[[15]](#cite_note-15) However, it has been determined that these weapons were named because of their use by the Franks, not the other way around.[[16]](#cite_note-16)

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

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### Prehistory (before the 6th century BC)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|alt=Lascaux cave paintings: a horse from Dordogne facing right brown on white background|One of the](/wiki/File:Lascaux2.jpg) [Lascaux](/wiki/Lascaux) paintings: a horse – [Dordogne](/wiki/Dordogne), approximately 18,000 BC The oldest traces of [human life](/wiki/Homo) in what is now France date from approximately 1.8 million years ago.[[17]](#cite_note-17) [Humans](/wiki/Homo_Sapiens) were then confronted by a harsh and variable climate, marked by several glacial eras. Early homonids led a [nomadic](/wiki/Nomad) [hunter-gatherer](/wiki/Hunter-gatherer) life.[[17]](#cite_note-17) France has a large number of decorated caves from the [upper Paleolithic](/wiki/Upper_Paleolithic) era, including one of the most famous and best preserved: [Lascaux](/wiki/Lascaux)[[17]](#cite_note-17) (approximately 18,000 BC).

At the end of the [last glacial period](/wiki/Last_glacial_period) (10,000 BC), the climate became milder;[[17]](#cite_note-17) from approximately 7,000 BC, this part of Western Europe entered the [Neolithic](/wiki/Neolithic) era and its inhabitants became [sedentary](/wiki/Sedentary_lifestyle). After strong demographic and agricultural development between the 4th and 3rd millennia, metallurgy appeared at the end of the 3rd millennium, initially working [gold](/wiki/Gold), [copper](/wiki/Copper) and [bronze](/wiki/Bronze), and later [iron](/wiki/Iron).[[18]](#cite_note-18) France has numerous [megalithic](/wiki/Megalith) sites from the Neolithic period, including the exceptionally dense [Carnac stones](/wiki/Carnac_stones) site (approximately 3,300 BC).

### Antiquity (6th century BC–5th century AD)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

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In 600 BC, [Ionian](/wiki/Ionia) [Greeks](/wiki/Greeks_in_pre-Roman_Gaul), originating from [Phocaea](/wiki/Phocaea), founded the [colony of Massalia](/wiki/Greek_colonies) (present-day [Marseille](/wiki/Marseille)), on the shores of the [Mediterranean Sea](/wiki/Mediterranean_Sea). This makes it France's oldest city.[[19]](#cite_note-19)[[20]](#cite_note-20) At the same time, some Gallic Celtic tribes penetrated parts of the current territory of France, and this occupation spread to the rest of France between the 5th and 3rd century BC.[[21]](#cite_note-21)[thumb|alt=Maison Carrée temple in Nemausus Corinthian columns and portico|The](/wiki/File:The_Maison_Carrée,_1st_century_BCE_Corinthian_temple_commissioned_by_Marcus_Agrippa,_Nemausus_(Nîmes,_France)_(14562136110).jpg) [Maison Carrée](/wiki/Maison_Carrée) was a temple of the [Gallo-Roman](/wiki/Gallo-Roman_culture) city of Nemausus (present-day [Nîmes](/wiki/Nîmes)) and is one of the best preserved vestiges of the [Roman Empire](/wiki/Roman_Empire).

The concept of [Gaul](/wiki/Gaul) emerged at that time; it corresponds to the territories of Celtic settlement ranging between the [Rhine](/wiki/Rhine), the [Atlantic Ocean](/wiki/Atlantic_Ocean), the [Pyrenees](/wiki/Pyrenees) and the Mediterranean. The borders of modern France are roughly the same as those of ancient Gaul, which was inhabited by Celtic *Gauls*. Gaul was then a prosperous country, of which the southernmost part was heavily subject to Greek and Roman influences.

Around 390 BC the Gallic [chieftain](/wiki/Tribal_chief) [Brennus](/wiki/Brennus_(4th_century_BC)) and his troops made their way to Italy through the [Alps](/wiki/Alps), defeated the Romans in the [Battle of the Allia](/wiki/Battle_of_the_Allia), and besieged and [ransomed](/wiki/Ransom) Rome. The Gallic invasion left Rome weakened, and the Gauls continued to harass the region until 345 BC when they entered into a formal peace treaty with Rome. But the Romans and the Gauls would remain adversaries for the next several centuries, and the Gauls would continue to be a threat in [Italia](/wiki/Italy_(Roman_Empire)).

Around 125 BC, the south of Gaul was conquered by the Romans, who called this region [*Provincia Nostra*](/wiki/Gallia_Narbonensis) ("Our Province"), which over time evolved into the name [Provence](/wiki/Provence) in French.[[22]](#cite_note-22) [Julius Caesar](/wiki/Julius_Caesar) conquered the remainder of Gaul and overcame a revolt carried out by the Gallic chieftain [Vercingetorix](/wiki/Vercingetorix) in 52 BC.[[23]](#cite_note-23) Gaul was divided by [Augustus](/wiki/Augustus) into Roman provinces.<ref name=c53>Carpentier et al. 2000, pp. 53–55</ref> Many cities were founded during the [Gallo-Roman period](/wiki/Roman_Gaul), including [Lugdunum](/wiki/Lugdunum) (present-day [Lyon](/wiki/Lyon)), which is considered the capital of the Gauls.[[24]](#cite_note-24) These cities were built in traditional Roman style, with a [forum](/wiki/Roman_Forum), a [theatre](/wiki/Roman_theatre_(structure)), a [circus](/wiki/Circus_(building)), an [amphitheatre](/wiki/Amphitheatre) and [thermal baths](/wiki/Thermal_bath). The Gauls mixed with Roman settlers and eventually adopted Roman culture and [Roman](/wiki/Romance_languages) speech ([Latin](/wiki/Latin), from which the French language evolved). The [Roman polytheism](/wiki/Religion_in_ancient_Rome) merged with the [Gallic paganism](/wiki/Celtic_polytheism) into the same [syncretism](/wiki/Syncretism).

From the 250s to the 280s AD, Roman Gaul suffered a serious crisis with its [fortified borders](/wiki/Limes) being attacked on several occasions by [barbarians](/wiki/Barbarian).<ref name=c77>Carpentier et al. 2000, pp. 76–77</ref> Nevertheless, the situation improved in the first half of the 4th century, which was a period of revival and prosperity for Roman Gaul.[[25]](#cite_note-25) In 312, the emperor [Constantin I](/wiki/Constantine_the_Great) converted to Christianity. Subsequently, Christians, who had been persecuted until then, increased rapidly across the entire Roman Empire.[[26]](#cite_note-26) But, from the beginning of the 5th century, the [Barbarian Invasions](/wiki/Migration_Period) resumed,[[27]](#cite_note-27) and [Germanic tribes](/wiki/Germanic_peoples), such as the [Vandals](/wiki/Vandals), [Suebi](/wiki/Suebi) and [Alans](/wiki/Alans) crossed the Rhine and settled in Gaul, Spain and other parts of the [collapsing Roman Empire](/wiki/Decline_of_the_Roman_Empire).[[28]](#cite_note-28)

### Early Middle Ages (5th century–10th century)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|alt=animated gif showing expansion of Franks across Europe|Frankish expansion from 481 to 843/870.](/wiki/File:Franks_expansion.gif) At the end of the [Antiquity](/wiki/Late_Antiquity) period, ancient Gaul was divided into several Germanic kingdoms and a remaining Gallo-Roman territory, known as the [Kingdom of Syagrius](/wiki/Domain_of_Soissons). Simultaneously, [Celtic Britons](/wiki/Britons_(historical)), fleeing the [Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain](/wiki/Anglo-Saxon_settlement_of_Britain), settled the western part of [Armorica](/wiki/Armorica). As a result, the Armorican [peninsula](/wiki/Peninsula) was renamed [Brittany](/wiki/Brittany), [Celtic culture](/wiki/Celts) was revived and independent [petty kingdoms](/wiki/Petty_kingdom) arose in this region. [thumb|left|upright|alt=painting of Clovis I conversion to Catholicism in 498, a king being baptized in a tub in a cathedral surrounded by bishop and monks|With](/wiki/File:Chlodwigs_taufe.jpg) [Clovis'](/wiki/Clovis_I) conversion to Catholicism in 498, the [Frankish monarchy](/wiki/List_of_Frankish_kings), [elective](/wiki/Elective_monarchy) and [secular](/wiki/Secular_state) until then, became [hereditary](/wiki/Hereditary_monarchy) and of [divine right](/wiki/Divine_right_of_kings). The pagan [Franks](/wiki/Franks), from whom the ancient name of "Francie" was derived, originally settled the north part of [Gaul](/wiki/Gaul), but under [Clovis I](/wiki/Clovis_I) conquered most of the other kingdoms in northern and central Gaul. In 498, Clovis I was the first Germanic conqueror after the fall of the Roman Empire to convert to Catholic Christianity, rather than [Arianism](/wiki/Arianism); thus France was given the title "Eldest daughter of the Church" ([*Template:Lang-fr*](/wiki/Template:Lang-fr)) by the papacy,[[29]](#cite_note-29) and French kings would be called "the Most Christian Kings of France" ([*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang)).

The Franks embraced the Christian [Gallo-Roman culture](/wiki/Gallo-Roman_culture) and ancient Gaul was eventually renamed [*Francia*](/wiki/Francia) ("Land of the Franks"). The Germanic Franks adopted [Romanic languages](/wiki/Romance_languages), except in northern Gaul where Roman settlements were less dense and where [Germanic languages](/wiki/Germanic_languages) emerged. Clovis made Paris his capital and established the [Merovingian dynasty](/wiki/Merovingian_dynasty), but his kingdom would not survive his death. The Franks treated land purely as a private possession and divided it among their heirs, so four kingdoms emerged from Clovis's: Paris, [Orléans](/wiki/Orléans), [Soissons](/wiki/Soissons), and [Rheims](/wiki/Reims). The [last Merovingian kings](/wiki/Roi_fainéant) [lost power](/wiki/Power_behind_the_throne) to their [mayors of the palace](/wiki/Mayor_of_the_Palace) (head of household). One mayor of the palace, [Charles Martel](/wiki/Charles_Martel), defeated an [Islamic invasion of Gaul](/wiki/Islamic_invasion_of_Gaul) at the [Battle of Tours](/wiki/Battle_of_Tours) (732) and earned respect and power within the Frankish kingdoms. His son, [Pepin the Short](/wiki/Pepin_the_Short), seized the crown of Francia from the weakened Merovingians and founded the [Carolingian dynasty](/wiki/Carolingian_dynasty). Pepin's son, [Charlemagne](/wiki/Charlemagne), reunited the Frankish kingdoms and built a vast empire across [Western](/wiki/Western_Europe) and Central Europe.

Proclaimed [Holy Roman Emperor](/wiki/Holy_Roman_Emperor) by [Pope Leo III](/wiki/Pope_Leo_III) and thus establishing in earnest the French government's longtime [historical association](/wiki/History_of_Roman_Catholicism_in_France) with the [Catholic Church](/wiki/Catholic_Church),[[30]](#cite_note-30) Charlemagne tried to revive the [Western Roman Empire](/wiki/Western_Roman_Empire) and its cultural grandeur. Charlemagne's son, [Louis I](/wiki/Louis_the_Pious) (emperor 814–840), kept the empire united; however, this Carolingian Empire would not survive his death. In 843, under the [Treaty of Verdun](/wiki/Treaty_of_Verdun), the empire was divided between Louis' three sons, with [East Francia](/wiki/East_Francia) going to [Louis the German](/wiki/Louis_the_German), [Middle Francia](/wiki/Middle_Francia) to [Lothair I](/wiki/Lothair_I), and [West Francia](/wiki/West_Francia) to [Charles the Bald](/wiki/Charles_the_Bald). West Francia approximated the area occupied by, and was the precursor, to modern France.[[31]](#cite_note-31) During the 9th and 10th centuries, continually threatened by [Viking invasions](/wiki/Viking_expansion), France became a very decentralised state: the nobility's titles and lands became hereditary, and the authority of the king became more religious than secular and thus was less effective and constantly challenged by powerful noblemen. Thus was established [feudalism](/wiki/Feudalism) in France. Over time, some of the king's vassals would grow so powerful that they often posed a threat to the king. For example, after the [Battle of Hastings](/wiki/Battle_of_Hastings) in 1066, [William the Conqueror](/wiki/William_the_Conqueror) added "King of England" to his titles, becoming both the vassal to (as Duke of [Normandy](/wiki/Normandy)) and the equal of (as king of England) the king of France, creating recurring tensions.

### Late Middle Ages (10th century–15th century)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|upright|alt=Joan of Arc in plate armor holding sword facing left with gilded background|](/wiki/File:joan_of_arc_miniature_graded.jpg)[Joan of Arc](/wiki/Joan_of_Arc) led the French army to several important victories during the [Hundred Years' War](/wiki/Hundred_Years'_War), which paved the way for the final victory. [thumb|upright|alt=animated gif showing changes in French borders|](/wiki/File:French_borders_from_985_to_1947.gif)[French territorial evolution](/wiki/Territorial_evolution_of_France) from 985 to 1947

The Carolingian dynasty ruled France until 987, when [Hugh Capet](/wiki/Hugh_Capet), Duke of France and Count of Paris, was crowned [King of the Franks](/wiki/List_of_French_monarchs).[[32]](#cite_note-32) His descendants[Template:Mdashthe](/wiki/Template:Mdash) [Capetians](/wiki/House_of_Capet), the [House of Valois](/wiki/House_of_Valois), and the [House of Bourbon](/wiki/House_of_Bourbon)[Template:Mdashprogressively](/wiki/Template:Mdash) unified the country through wars and dynastic inheritance into the Kingdom of France, which was fully declared in 1190 by [Philip II Augustus](/wiki/Philip_II_of_France). The French kings played a prominent role in most [Crusades](/wiki/Crusades) in order to restore Christian access to the [Holy Land](/wiki/Holy_Land). French knights made up the bulk of the steady flow of reinforcements throughout the two-hundred-year span of the Crusades, in such a fashion that the Arabs uniformly referred to the crusaders as *Franj* caring little whether they really came from France.[[33]](#cite_note-33) The French Crusaders also imported the French language into the [Levant](/wiki/Levant), making [French](/wiki/Old_French) the base of the [*lingua franca*](/wiki/Lingua_franca) ("Frankish language") of the [Crusader states](/wiki/Crusader_states).[[33]](#cite_note-33) French knights also comprised the majority in both the [Hospital](/wiki/Knights_Hospitaller) and the [Temple orders](/wiki/Knights_Templar). The latter, in particular, held numerous properties throughout France and by the 13th century were the principal bankers for the French crown, until [Philip IV](/wiki/Philip_IV_of_France) annihilated the order in 1307. The [Albigensian Crusade](/wiki/Albigensian_Crusade) was launched in 1209 to eliminate the heretical [Cathars](/wiki/Catharism) in the southwestern area of modern-day France. In the end, the Cathars were exterminated and the autonomous [County of Toulouse](/wiki/Counts_of_Toulouse) was annexed into the kingdom of France.[[34]](#cite_note-34) Later kings expanded their [domain](/wiki/Crown_lands_of_France) to cover over half of modern continental France, including most of the north, centre and west of France. Meanwhile, the royal authority became more and more assertive, centred on a [hierarchically conceived society](/wiki/Estates_of_the_realm) distinguishing [nobility](/wiki/French_nobility), clergy, and [commoners](/wiki/Estates_General_(France)).

[Charles IV the Fair](/wiki/Charles_IV_of_France) died without an heir in 1328.[[35]](#cite_note-35) Under the rules of the [Salic law](/wiki/Salic_law) the crown of France could not pass to a woman nor could the line of kingship pass through the female line.[[35]](#cite_note-35) Accordingly, the crown passed to Philip of Valois, a cousin of Charles, rather than through the female line to Charles' nephew, Edward, who would soon become [Edward III of England](/wiki/Edward_III_of_England). During the reign of [Philip of Valois](/wiki/Philip_IV_of_France), the French monarchy reached the height of its medieval power.[[35]](#cite_note-35) Philip's seat on the throne was contested by Edward III of England and in 1337, on the eve of the first wave of the [Black Death](/wiki/Black_Death),<ref name=Encarta>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> England and France went to war in what would become known as the [Hundred Years' War](/wiki/Hundred_Years'_War).[[36]](#cite_note-36) The exact boundaries changed greatly with time, but French landholdings of the [English Kings](/wiki/List_of_English_monarchs) remained extensive for decades. With charismatic leaders, such as [Joan of Arc](/wiki/Joan_of_Arc) and [La Hire](/wiki/La_Hire), strong French counterattacks won back English continental territories. Like the rest of Europe, France was struck by the Black Death; half of the 17 million population of France died.[[37]](#cite_note-37)[[38]](#cite_note-38)

### Early modern period (15th century–1789)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|alt=painting of St. Bartholomew's Day massacre, convent church of the Grands-Augustins, the Seine and the bridge of the Millers, in the center, the Louvre and Catherine de' Medici.|The](/wiki/File:La_masacre_de_San_Bartolomé,_por_François_Dubois.jpg) [St. Bartholomew's Day massacre](/wiki/St._Bartholomew's_Day_massacre) (1572) was the climax of the [French Wars of Religion](/wiki/French_Wars_of_Religion), which were brought to an end by the [Edict of Nantes](/wiki/Edict_of_Nantes) (1598).

The French Renaissance saw a spectacular cultural development and the first standardization of the French language, which would become the [official language of France](/wiki/Ordinance_of_Villers-Cotterêts) and the language of Europe's aristocracy. It also saw a long set of wars, known as the [Italian Wars](/wiki/Italian_Wars), between the Kingdom of France and the powerful [Holy Roman Empire](/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire). French explorers, such as [Jacques Cartier](/wiki/Jacques_Cartier) or [Samuel de Champlain](/wiki/Samuel_de_Champlain), claimed lands in the Americas for France, paving the way for the expansion of the [First French colonial empire](/wiki/French_colonial_empire#First_French_colonial_empire). The rise of Protestantism in Europe led France to a civil war known as the [French Wars of Religion](/wiki/French_Wars_of_Religion), where, in the most notorious incident, thousands of [Huguenots](/wiki/Huguenot) were murdered in the [St. Bartholomew's Day massacre](/wiki/St._Bartholomew's_Day_massacre) of 1572.[[39]](#cite_note-39) The Wars of Religion were ended by [Henry IV's](/wiki/Henry_IV_of_France) [Edict of Nantes](/wiki/Edict_of_Nantes), which granted some freedom of religion to the Huguenots.

Under [Louis XIII](/wiki/Louis_XIII_of_France), the energetic [Cardinal Richelieu](/wiki/Cardinal_Richelieu) reinforced the centralization of the state, royal power and French dominance in Europe, foreshadowing the reign of [Louis XIV](/wiki/Louis_XIV). During Louis XIV's minority and the regency of [Queen Anne](/wiki/Anne_of_Austria) and [Cardinal Mazarin](/wiki/Cardinal_Mazarin), a period of trouble known as the [Fronde](/wiki/Fronde) occurred in France, which was at that time [at war with Spain](/wiki/Franco-Spanish_War_(1635)). This rebellion was driven by the great feudal lords and [sovereign courts](/wiki/Sovereign_court) as a reaction to the [rise of royal power](/wiki/Absolutism_(European_history)) in France. [thumb|upright|alt=Louis XIV of France standing in plate armor and blue sash facing left holding baton|](/wiki/File:Louis_le_Grand;_Rigaud_Hyacinthe.jpg)[Louis XIV](/wiki/Louis_XIV_of_France), the "sun king" was the [absolute monarch of France](/wiki/Absolute_monarchy_in_France) and made France the leading European power.

The monarchy reached its peak during the 17th century and the reign of Louis XIV. By turning powerful feudal lords into [courtiers](/wiki/Courtier) at the [Palace of Versailles](/wiki/Palace_of_Versailles), Louis XIV's personal power became unchallenged. Remembered for his numerous wars, he made France the leading European power. France became the [most populous country in Europe](/wiki/Demographics_of_France) and had tremendous influence over European politics, economy, and culture. French became the most-used language in diplomacy, science, literature and international affairs, and remained so until the 20th century.[[40]](#cite_note-40) France obtained many overseas possessions in the Americas, Africa and Asia. Louis XIV also [revoked the Edict of Nantes](/wiki/Edict_of_Fontainebleau), forcing thousands of Huguenots into exile.

Under [Louis XV](/wiki/Louis_XV_of_France), Louis XIV's grandson, France lost [New France](/wiki/New_France) and most of its [Indian possessions](/wiki/French_India) after its defeat in the [Seven Years' War](/wiki/Seven_Years'_War), which ended in 1763. Its [European territory](/wiki/Metropolitan_France) kept growing, however, with notable acquisitions such as [Lorraine](/wiki/Lorraine_(region)) (1766) and [Corsica](/wiki/Corsica) (1770). An unpopular king, Louis XV's weak rule, his ill-advised financial, political and military decisions [Template:Ndash](/wiki/Template:Ndash) as well as the debauchery of his court[Template:Ndash](/wiki/Template:Ndash) discredited the monarchy and arguably led to the French Revolution 15 years after his death.[[41]](#cite_note-41)[[42]](#cite_note-42) [Louis XVI](/wiki/Louis_XVI_of_France), Louis XV's grandson, actively [supported the Americans](/wiki/France_in_the_American_Revolutionary_War), who were seeking their [independence from Great Britain](/wiki/American_Revolutionary_War) (realized in the [Treaty of Paris (1783)](/wiki/Treaty_of_Paris_(1783))). The financial crisis that followed France's involvement in the American Revolutionary War was one of many contributing factors to the French Revolution. Much of the [Enlightenment](/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment) occurred in French intellectual circles, and major scientific breakthroughs and inventions, such as the [discovery of oxygen](/wiki/Antoine_Lavoisier) (1778) and the first [hot air balloon carrying passengers](/wiki/Montgolfier_brothers) (1783), were achieved by French scientists. French explorers, such as [Bougainville](/wiki/Louis_Antoine_de_Bougainville) and [Lapérouse](/wiki/Jean-François_de_Galaup,_comte_de_Lapérouse), took part in the [voyages of scientific exploration](/wiki/European_and_American_voyages_of_scientific_exploration) through maritime expeditions around the globe. The Enlightenment philosophy, in which [reason](/wiki/Rationalism) is advocated as the primary source for [legitimacy](/wiki/Legitimacy_(political)) and [authority](/wiki/Authority), undermined the power of and support for the monarchy and helped pave the way for the French Revolution.

### Modern period (1789–1914)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|alt=drawing of the Storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789, smoke of gunfire enveloping stone castle|The](/wiki/File:Prise_de_la_Bastille.jpg) [Storming of the Bastille](/wiki/Storming_of_the_Bastille) on 14 July 1789 was the starting event of the [French Revolution](/wiki/French_Revolution).

Facing financial troubles, [Louis XVI](/wiki/Louis_XVI_of_France) summoned the [Estates-General](/wiki/Estates-General_of_1789) (gathering the three [Estates of the realm](/wiki/Estates_of_the_realm)) in May 1789 to propose solutions to his government. As it came to an impasse, the representatives of the [Third Estate](/wiki/Commoner) formed into a [National Assembly](/wiki/National_Assembly_(French_Revolution)), signaling the outbreak of the [French Revolution](/wiki/French_Revolution). Fearing that the king would suppress the newly created National Assembly, insurgents [stormed the Bastille](/wiki/Storming_of_the_Bastille) on 14 July 1789, a date which would become [France's National Day](/wiki/Bastille_Day).

The absolute monarchy was subsequently replaced by a [constitutional monarchy](/wiki/Kingdom_of_France_(1791–1792)). Through the [Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen](/wiki/Declaration_of_the_Rights_of_Man_and_of_the_Citizen), France established fundamental rights for men. The Declaration affirms "the natural and imprescriptible rights of man" to "liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression". Freedom of speech and press were declared, and arbitrary arrests outlawed. It called for the destruction of aristocratic privileges and proclaimed freedom and equal rights for all men, as well as access to public office based on talent rather than birth. While Louis XVI, as a [constitutional king](/wiki/Kingdom_of_France_(1791–92)), enjoyed popularity among the population, his disastrous [flight to Varennes](/wiki/Flight_to_Varennes) seemed to justify rumours he had tied his hopes of political salvation to the prospects of foreign invasion. His credibility was so deeply undermined that the [abolition of the monarchy](/wiki/Abolished_monarchy) and establishment of a republic became an increasing possibility.

European [monarchies gathered](/wiki/Declaration_of_Pillnitz) against the new régime, to restore the French absolute monarchy. The foreign threat exacerbated France's political turmoil and deepened the sense of urgency among the various factions and [war was declared against Austria](/wiki/War_of_the_First_Coalition) on 20 April 1792. [Mob violence](/wiki/Riot) occurred during the [insurrection of 10 August 1792](/wiki/10_August_(French_Revolution))[[43]](#cite_note-43) and the [following month](/wiki/September_Massacres).[[44]](#cite_note-44) As a result of this violence and the political instability of the constitutional monarchy, the [Republic was proclaimed](/wiki/French_First_Republic) on 22 September 1792.

[thumb|left|alt=painting of Napoleon in 1806 standing with hand in vest attended by staff and Imperial guard regiment|](/wiki/File:Napoleon_in_1806.PNG)[Napoleon](/wiki/Napoleon), [Emperor of the French](/wiki/Emperor_of_the_French), and his [*Grande Armée*](/wiki/Grande_Armée) built a [vast Empire](/wiki/First_French_Empire) across Europe. He helped spread the French revolutionary ideals and his legal reforms had a major influence worldwide.

[Louis XVI](/wiki/Louis_XVI_of_France) was [convicted](/wiki/Trial_of_Louis_XVI) of [treason](/wiki/Treason) and [guillotined](/wiki/Execution_of_Louis_XVI) in 1793. Facing increasing pressure from European monarchies, internal guerrilla wars and [counterrevolutions](/wiki/Counter-revolutionary) (such as the [War in the Vendée](/wiki/War_in_the_Vendée) or the [Chouannerie](/wiki/Chouannerie)), the [young Republic](/wiki/National_Convention) fell into the [Reign of Terror](/wiki/Reign_of_Terror). Between 1793 and 1794, between 16,000 and 40,000 people were executed. In Western France, the civil war between the *Bleus* ("Blues", supporters of the Revolution) and the *Blancs* ("Whites", supporters of the Monarchy) lasted from 1793 to 1796 and led to the loss of between 200,000 and 450,000 lives.[[45]](#cite_note-45)[[46]](#cite_note-46) Both foreign armies and French counter-revolutionaries were crushed and the French Republic survived. Furthermore, it extended greatly its boundaries and established "[Sister Republics](/wiki/French_client_republic)" in the surrounding countries. As the threat of a foreign invasion receded and France became mostly pacified, the [Thermidorian Reaction](/wiki/Thermidorian_Reaction) put an end to [Robespierre's](/wiki/Maximilien_Robespierre) rule and to the Terror. The [abolition of slavery](/wiki/Abolitionism_in_France) and male [universal suffrage](/wiki/Universal_suffrage), enacted during this radical phase of the revolution, were cancelled by subsequent governments.

After a [short-lived governmental scheme](/wiki/French_Directory), [Napoleon](/wiki/Napoleon) Bonaparte [seized control of the Republic](/wiki/18_Brumaire) in 1799 becoming [First Consul](/wiki/French_Consulate) and later [Emperor](/wiki/Constitution_of_the_Year_XII) of the [French Empire](/wiki/First_French_Empire) (1804–1814/1815). As a continuation of [the wars](/wiki/French_Revolutionary_Wars) sparked by the European monarchies against the French Republic, changing sets of [European Coalitions](/wiki/Napoleonic_Wars) declared wars on Napoleon's Empire. His armies conquered most of continental Europe with swift victories such as the [battles of Jena-Auerstadt](/wiki/Battle_of_Jena-Auerstadt) or [Austerlitz](/wiki/Battle_of_Austerlitz). He redrew the European political map, while members of the [Bonaparte](/wiki/House_of_Bonaparte) family were appointed as monarchs in some of the newly established kingdoms.[[47]](#cite_note-47) These victories led to the worldwide expansion of French revolutionary ideals and reforms, such as the [Metric system](/wiki/Metric_system), the [Napoleonic Code](/wiki/Napoleonic_Code) and the Declaration of the Rights of Man. After the catastrophic [Russian campaign](/wiki/French_invasion_of_Russia), and the ensuing [uprising of European monarchies](/wiki/War_of_the_Sixth_Coalition) against his rule, Napoleon was defeated and the Bourbon monarchy [restored](/wiki/Bourbon_Restoration#First_Restoration_(1814)). About a million Frenchmen died during the Napoleonic Wars.[[47]](#cite_note-47) [thumb|alt=animated gif of French colonial territory on world map|Animated map of the growth and decline of the](/wiki/File:French_Empire_evolution.gif) [French colonial empire](/wiki/French_colonial_empire). After his [brief return](/wiki/Hundred_Days) from exile, Napoleon was finally defeated in 1815 at the [Battle of Waterloo](/wiki/Battle_of_Waterloo), the monarchy was [re-established](/wiki/Bourbon_Restoration#Second_Restoration_(1815)) (1815–1830), with new constitutional limitations. The discredited Bourbon dynasty was overthrown by the [July Revolution](/wiki/July_Revolution) of 1830, which established the constitutional [July Monarchy](/wiki/July_Monarchy), which lasted until 1848, when the [French Second Republic](/wiki/French_Second_Republic) was proclaimed, in the wake of the European [Revolutions of 1848](/wiki/Revolutions_of_1848). The abolition of slavery and male [universal suffrage](/wiki/Universal_suffrage), both briefly enacted during the French Revolution were re-enacted in 1848. In 1852, the [president of the French Republic](/wiki/President_of_France), [Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte](/wiki/Napoleon_III), Napoleon I's nephew, was proclaimed emperor of the [second Empire](/wiki/Second_French_Empire), as Napoleon III. He multiplied French interventions abroad, especially in [Crimea](/wiki/Crimean_War), in [Mexico](/wiki/French_intervention_in_Mexico) and [Italy](/wiki/Second_Italian_War_of_Independence) which resulted in the annexation of the [duchy of Savoy](/wiki/Duchy_of_Savoy) and the [county of Nice](/wiki/County_of_Nice), then part of the [Kingdom of Sardinia](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Sardinia). Napoleon III was unseated following defeat in the [Franco-Prussian War](/wiki/Franco-Prussian_War) of 1870 and his regime was replaced by the [Third Republic](/wiki/French_Third_Republic). France had [colonial possessions](/wiki/French_colonial_empire), in various forms, since the beginning of the 17th century, but in the 19th and 20th centuries, its [global overseas colonial empire](/wiki/List_of_largest_empires) extended greatly and became the second largest in the world behind the [British Empire](/wiki/British_Empire). Including [metropolitan France](/wiki/Metropolitan_France), the total area of land under French [sovereignty](/wiki/Sovereignty) almost reached 13 million square kilometres in the 1920s and 1930s, 8.6% of the world's land. Known as the [*Belle Époque*](/wiki/Belle_Époque), the turn of the century was a period characterized by optimism, regional peace, economic prosperity and technological, scientific and cultural innovations. In 1905, [state secularism](/wiki/State_secularism) was [officially established](/wiki/1905_French_law_on_the_Separation_of_the_Churches_and_the_State).

### Contemporary period (1914–present)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|alt=Autochrome of the 114 Infantery regiment in París, on 14 July 1917, with French flag unfurled laying on stacked arms|French](/wiki/File:El_114_de_infantería,_en_París,_el_14_de_julio_de_1917,_León_Gimpel.jpg) [poilus](/wiki/Poilu) sustained the highest [number of casualties](/wiki/World_War_I_casualties) among the Allies in [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I).

France was a member of the [Triple Entente](/wiki/Triple_Entente) when World War I broke out. A small part of Northern France was occupied, but France and its allies emerged victorious against the [Central Powers](/wiki/Central_Powers) at a tremendous human and material cost. World War I left 1.4 million French soldiers dead, 4% of its population.[[48]](#cite_note-48) Between 27 and 30% of soldiers conscripted from 1912–1915 were killed.[[49]](#cite_note-49) The interbellum years were marked by [intense international tensions](/wiki/Events_preceding_World_War_II_in_Europe) and a variety of social reforms introduced by the [Popular Front government](/wiki/Popular_Front_(France)) ([annual leave](/wiki/Annual_leave), [eight-hour workdays](/wiki/Eight-hour_day), women in government, etc...).

[thumb|upright|alt=Charles de Gaulle seated in uniform looking left with folded arms|](/wiki/File:De_Gaulle-OWI.jpg)[Charles de Gaulle](/wiki/Charles_de_Gaulle) took an active part in many major events of the 20th century: a hero of World War I, leader of the [Free French](/wiki/Free_French_Forces) during [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II), he then became [President](/wiki/President_of_France), where he facilitated decolonization, maintained France as a major power and overcame the [revolt of May 1968](/wiki/May_1968_in_France).

In 1940 France was [invaded](/wiki/Battle_of_France) and occupied by [Nazi Germany](/wiki/Nazi_Germany). Metropolitan France was divided into a [German occupation zone in the north](/wiki/German_military_administration_in_occupied_France_during_World_War_II) and [Vichy France](/wiki/Vichy_France), a newly established authoritarian regime collaborating with Germany, in the south, while [Free France](/wiki/Free_France), the government-in-exile led by [Charles de Gaulle](/wiki/Charles_de_Gaulle), was set up in London.[[50]](#cite_note-50) From 1942 to 1944, about 160,000 French citizens, including around [75,000 Jews](/wiki/The_Holocaust_in_France),[[51]](#cite_note-51)[[52]](#cite_note-52)[[53]](#cite_note-53) and the [November attacks](/wiki/November_2015_Paris_attacks) which resulted in 130 deaths, the deadliest attack on French soil since [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II),[[64]](#cite_note-64)[[65]](#cite_note-65) and the deadliest in the European Union since the [Madrid train bombings in 2004](/wiki/2004_Madrid_train_bombings).[[66]](#cite_note-66)

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

### Location and Borders[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[thumb|alt=see description|A relief map of Metropolitan France, showing cities with over 100,000 inhabitants.](/wiki/File:France_cities.png) [thumb|alt=world ocean map showing territorial waters of France|France has the World's second largest territorial waters.](/wiki/File:Territorial_waters_-_France.svg)

The European part of France is called [Metropolitan France](/wiki/Metropolitan_France) and it is located in one of the occidental ends of Europe. It is bordered by the [North Sea](/wiki/North_Sea) in the north, the [English Channel](/wiki/English_Channel) in the north-west, the [Atlantic Ocean](/wiki/Atlantic_Ocean) in the west and the Mediterranean sea in the south-east. It borders [Belgium](/wiki/Belgium) and [Luxembourg](/wiki/Luxembourg) in the north east. It also borders [Germany](/wiki/Germany) and [Switzerland](/wiki/Switzerland) in the east, [Italy](/wiki/Italy) and [Monaco](/wiki/Monaco) in the south-east, [Spain](/wiki/Spain) and [Andorra](/wiki/Andorra) in the south west. The borders in the south and in the east of the country are mountain ranges: the Pyrenees, the Alps and the Jura, the border in the east is from the [Rhine](/wiki/Rhine) river, while the border in the north and the north east melts in no natural elements. Due to its shape, it is often referred to in French as [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang) ("The [Hexagon](/wiki/Hexagon)"). Metropolitan France includes various islands: [Corsica](/wiki/Corsica) and coastal islands. Metropolitan France is situated mostly between latitudes [41°](/wiki/41st_parallel_north) and [51° N](/wiki/51st_parallel_north), and longitudes [6° W](/wiki/6th_meridian_west) and [10° E](/wiki/10th_meridian_east), on the western edge of Europe, and thus lies within the northern [temperate](/wiki/Temperateness) zone. Its continental part covers about 1000 km from north to south and from east to west.

France has [Overseas regions](/wiki/Overseas_departments_and_territories_of_France) across the world. These territories have varying statuses in the territorial administration of France and are located:

* In South American: [French Guiana](/wiki/French_Guiana).
* In the Atlantic Ocean: [Saint Pierre and Miquelon](/wiki/Saint_Pierre_and_Miquelon) and, in the Antilles: [Guadeloupe](/wiki/Guadeloupe), [Martinique](/wiki/Martinique), [Saint Martin](/wiki/Collectivity_of_Saint_Martin) and [Saint Barthélemy](/wiki/Saint_Barthélemy).
* In the Pacific Ocean: [French Polynesia](/wiki/French_Polynesia), the special collectivity of [New Caledonia](/wiki/New_Caledonia), [Wallis and Futuna](/wiki/Wallis_and_Futuna) and [Clipperton Island](/wiki/Clipperton_Island).
* In the Indian Ocean: [Réunion island](/wiki/Réunion_island), [Scattered Islands in the Indian Ocean](/wiki/Scattered_Islands_in_the_Indian_Ocean), [Crozet Islands](/wiki/Crozet_Islands), [St. Paul](/wiki/Île_Saint-Paul) and [Amsterdam](/wiki/Île_Amsterdam) islands.
* In the Indian Ocean: [Kerguelen Islands](/wiki/Kerguelen_Islands).
* In the Antarctic: [Adélie Land](/wiki/Adélie_Land).

France has land borders with [Brazil](/wiki/Brazil) and [Suriname](/wiki/Suriname) in [French Guiana](/wiki/French_Guiana) and also with the [Kingdom of the Netherlands](/wiki/Kingdom_of_the_Netherlands) through the French part of [Saint Martin](/wiki/Saint_Martin).

The European territory of France covers [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert),[[67]](#cite_note-67) the largest among [European Union](/wiki/European_Union) members.<ref name = superficy>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> France's total land area, with its overseas departments and territories (excluding [Adélie Land](/wiki/Adélie_Land)), is [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), 0.45% of the total land area on Earth. France possesses a wide variety of landscapes, from coastal plains in the north and west to mountain ranges of the [Alps](/wiki/Alps) in the southeast, the [Massif Central](/wiki/Massif_Central) in the south central and [Pyrenees](/wiki/Pyrenees) in the southwest.

Due to its numerous [overseas departments and territories](/wiki/Overseas_departments_and_territories_of_France) scattered on all oceans of the planet, France possesses the second-largest [Exclusive economic zone](/wiki/Exclusive_economic_zone) (EEZ) in the world, covering 11,035,000 km2 (4,260,000 mi2), just behind the EEZ of the United States (11,351,000 km2 / 4,383,000 mi2), but ahead of the EEZ of Australia (8,148,250 km2 / 4,111,312 mi2). Its EEZ covers approximately 8% of the total surface of all the EEZs of the world.

At [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert)[[68]](#cite_note-68) above sea level, the highest point in Western Europe, [Mont Blanc](/wiki/Mont_Blanc), is situated in the Alps on the border between France and Italy. France also has extensive river systems such as the [Seine](/wiki/Seine), the [Loire](/wiki/Loire), the [Garonne](/wiki/Garonne), and the [Rhone](/wiki/Rhone), which divides the Massif Central from the Alps and flows into the Mediterranean Sea at the [Camargue](/wiki/Camargue). Corsica lies off the Mediterranean coast.

### Climate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

Most of the plains of metropolitan France excluding Corse, are located in the oceanic area, Cfb, Cwb et Cfc in the classification of Köppen, a little part of the territory built by plains or hills bordering the mediterranean basin that has a climate designed by Csa and Csb in the Köppen classification. The French metropolitan territory is relatively extended, the climate is not uniform, it is possible to detail at a finer level and to distinguish the following climate nuances.

* The strict [oceanic climate](/wiki/Oceanic_climate) is located in the west of France – it extends from Flandre in The Basque Country on a coastal strip of several tens of kilometres (the limit is difficult to define), closer to the north and south, wider in Britain that is concerned almost entirely by this climate.
  + The south climate is also oceanic but warmer, because nearer to the south, it is affected by the aquitaine aquitaine climate.
  + The climate of the north-west facade is oceanic but cooler than the aquitaine one and the wind intensity is much stronger.
* Away from the coast, the climate is always oceanic but it characteristics change a little. In the Paris sedimentary basin and more in the intra mountain basins the seasonal amplitude becomes a little stronger, the autumn rains and winter especially are less marked; therefore, most of the territory has qualified climate gradient semi-oceanic climate. This is a transition zone between the strict oceanic climate and [continental climate](/wiki/Continental_climate):
  + The oceanic degraded climate of plain in the centre.north, sometimes called "parisien" due tot eh fact that corresponds approximately to the Paris basin where the oceanic climate is slightly altered;
  + and the [semi-continental climate](/wiki/Continental_climate) in the north and in the centre-west (Alsace, plains of Saône or of middle-Rhône, plains "dauphinoises", "auvergnates" ou "savoyardes" which features further modified by the neighbouring mountain ranges.
* Due to the provision of air masses, especially in summer, and mountain borders that isolate some of the rest of the country, the Mediterranean and the lower Rhone valley, swept by the Mistral and Tramontana experiencing [Mediterranean climate](/wiki/Mediterranean_climate).
* The [mountain (or alpine) climate](/wiki/Mountain_climate) is presented mainly in the [Alps](/wiki/French_Alps), the [Pyrenees](/wiki/Pyrenees), the [Massif Central](/wiki/Massif_Central), the [Jura](/wiki/Jura_Mountains) and the [Vosges](/wiki/Vosges).
* In the [overseas regions](/wiki/Overseas_departments_and_territories_of_France), there are three broad types of climate:
* A [tropical climate](/wiki/Tropical_climate) in most overseas regions: high constant temperature throughout the year with a dry and a wet season
* An [equatorial climate](/wiki/Equatorial_climate) in [French Guiana](/wiki/French_Guiana): high constant temperature throughout the year with even precipitation throughout the year
* A [subpolar climate](/wiki/Subarctic_climate) in [Saint Pierre and Miquelon](/wiki/Saint_Pierre_and_Miquelon) and in most of the [French Southern and Antarctic Lands](/wiki/French_Southern_and_Antarctic_Lands): short mild summers and long very cold winters

[Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear) <gallery mode=packed> File:Weinberg Cote de Nuits.jpg| [Vineyards](/wiki/French_wine) in [Côte de Nuits](/wiki/Côte_de_Nuits), [Burgundy](/wiki/Burgundy_(French_region)) File:Lavender field.jpg|[Mediterranean](/wiki/Mediterranean_Sea) vegetation ([lavender](/wiki/Lavender)) in [Provence](/wiki/Provence) File:Aiguille du Dru 3.jpg|[Alpine climate](/wiki/Alpine_climate) (winter) in the [French Alps](/wiki/French_Alps) File:Piana Dardo dans les Calanche.jpg|Semi-arid climate in [Corsica](/wiki/Corsica) File:Bora Bora - Mt Otemanu.jpg|[Tropical climate](/wiki/Tropical_climate) in [Bora Bora](/wiki/Bora_Bora) ([French Polynesia](/wiki/French_Polynesia)) </gallery>

### Environment[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|alt=color map showing Regional natural parks of France|Marine (blue),](/wiki/File:Parcs_naturels_français.svg) [Regional](/wiki/Regional_natural_parks_of_France) (green) and [National (red) natural parks](/wiki/National_parks_of_France) in France [thumb|alt=panorama of Mont Blanc mountain range above gray clouds under a blue sky|](/wiki/File:Massif_du_Mont-Blanc_(hiver_panoramique).jpg)[Mont Blanc](/wiki/Mont_Blanc) is the highest summit in Western Europe.

France was one of the first countries to create an environment ministry, in 1971.[[69]](#cite_note-69) Although it is one of the most industrialised countries in the world, France is ranked [only 17th by carbon dioxide emissions](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_carbon_dioxide_emissions), behind less populous nations such as Canada or Australia. This is due to France's decision to invest in [nuclear power](/wiki/Nuclear_power) following the [1973 oil crisis](/wiki/1973_oil_crisis),[[70]](#cite_note-70) which now accounts for 75% of its electricity production[[71]](#cite_note-71) and results in less pollution.[[72]](#cite_note-72)[[73]](#cite_note-73) Like all European Union members, France agreed to cut [carbon emissions](/wiki/Carbon_emissions) by at least 20% of 1990 levels by the year 2020,[[74]](#cite_note-74) compared to the U.S. plan to reduce emissions by 4% of 1990 levels.[[75]](#cite_note-75) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), French carbon dioxide emissions per capita were lower than that of China's.[[76]](#cite_note-76) The country was set to impose a [carbon tax](/wiki/Carbon_tax) in 2009 at 17 euros per tonne of carbon emitted,[[77]](#cite_note-77) which would have raised 4 billion euros of revenue annually.[[78]](#cite_note-78) However, the plan was abandoned due to fears of burdening French businesses.[[79]](#cite_note-79) Forests account for 28% of France's land area,[[80]](#cite_note-80)[[81]](#cite_note-81) and are some of the most diverse in Europe, comprising more than 140 species of trees.[[82]](#cite_note-82) There are nine [national parks](/wiki/National_park)[[83]](#cite_note-83) and 46 [natural parks](/wiki/Protected_area) in France,[[84]](#cite_note-84) with the government planning to convert 20% of its [Exclusive Economic Zone](/wiki/Exclusive_economic_zone) into a [Marine Protected Area](/wiki/Marine_protected_area) by 2020.[[85]](#cite_note-85) A regional nature park[[86]](#cite_note-86) ([Template:Lang-fr](/wiki/Template:Lang-fr) or PNR) is a public establishment in France between local authorities and the [French national government](/wiki/Cabinet_of_France) covering an inhabited rural area of outstanding beauty, in order to protect the scenery and heritage as well as setting up sustainable economic development in the area.[[87]](#cite_note-87) A PNR sets goals and guidelines for managed human habitation, sustainable economic development, and protection of the natural environment based on each park's unique landscape and heritage. The parks also foster ecological research programs and public education in the natural sciences.<ref name=FGTO>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of) there are 49 PNRs in France.

According to the 2012 [Environmental Performance Index](/wiki/Environmental_Performance_Index) conducted by Yale and [Columbia](/wiki/Columbia_University), France was the sixth-most environmentally conscious country in the world, one place higher than the previous report in 2010.[[88]](#cite_note-88)[[89]](#cite_note-89)

### Geology, topography and hydrography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

Metropolitan France has a wide variety of topographical sets and natural landscapes. Large parts of the current territory of France were raised during several tectonic episodes like the Hercynian uplift in the Paleozoic Era which is the origin of Armorican Massif, central, morvandeau, Vosges, Ardennes and corse. The Alpine, Pyrenean and Jura mountains are themselves much younger and have less eroded forms – the Alpine peak at 4809 meters above sea level at the Mount White. Although 60% of municipalities are classified as having seismic risks, these risks remain moderate. These massifs delineate several sedimentary basins, including the Aquitaine basin in the southwest and the Paris basin in the north – the last one includes several areas of particularly fertile ground, including silt trays of Beauce and Brie. In addition, various routes of natural passage, such as the Rhone valley, allow easy communications. The coastlines offer contrasting landscapes: mountain ranges of benefits (the French Riviera, for example), plateaus ending on cliffs (the Alabaster Coast), wetlands and forest areas of Sologne or wide sandy plains (the Languedoc plain). The river system in France is mainly organised around four major rivers: the Loire, the Seine, the Garonne and the Rhône to which can be added the Meuse and Rhine. The latter of lower importance to France but significant to Europe in general. The French watershed of the first four matches over 62% of the metropolitan territory. France has 11 million square kilometres of marine waters under its jurisdiction, within three oceans of which 97% are overseas.

### Administrative divisions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|alt=color map of the regions of France|The 18](/wiki/File:Regions_of_France_(2016),with_departements.png) [regions](/wiki/Regions_of_France) and 101 [departments](/wiki/Departments_of_France) of France. Paris area is expanded (inset at upper left); overseas regions (lower left) not shown to scale.

France is divided into 18 administrative regions: 13 regions in [metropolitan France](/wiki/Metropolitan_France) (including the territorial collectivity of [Corsica](/wiki/Corsica)),[[90]](#cite_note-90) and five located [overseas](/wiki/Overseas_region).[[67]](#cite_note-67) The regions are further subdivided into 101 departments,[[91]](#cite_note-91) which are numbered mainly alphabetically. This number is used in postal codes and was formerly used on vehicle number plates. Among the 101 departments of France, five ([French Guiana](/wiki/French_Guiana), [Guadeloupe](/wiki/Guadeloupe), [Martinique](/wiki/Martinique), [Mayotte](/wiki/Mayotte), and [Réunion](/wiki/Réunion)) are in overseas regions (ROMs) that are also simultaneously overseas departments (DOMs) and are an integral part of France (and the European Union) and thus enjoy exactly the same status as metropolitan departments.

The 101 departments are subdivided into 335 [arrondissements](/wiki/Arrondissements_of_France), which are, in turn, subdivided into 2,054 [cantons](/wiki/Cantons_of_France).<ref name=constituencies>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> These cantons are then divided into 36,658 [communes](/wiki/Communes_of_France), which are municipalities with an elected municipal council.[[92]](#cite_note-92) Three communes—Paris, Lyon and Marseille—are subdivided into 45 [municipal arrondissements](/wiki/Municipal_arrondissements_of_France).

The regions, departments and communes are all known as [territorial collectivities](/wiki/Territorial_collectivity), meaning they possess local assemblies as well as an executive. Arrondissements and cantons are merely administrative divisions. However, this was not always the case. Until 1940, the arrondissements were territorial collectivities with an elected assembly, but these were suspended by the [Vichy regime](/wiki/Vichy_France) and definitely abolished by the [Fourth Republic](/wiki/French_Fourth_Republic) in 1946.[[93]](#cite_note-93) The 13 regions of Metropolitan France (from January 2016):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **French Spelling** | **English Spelling** |
| Alsace-Champagne-Ardenne-Lorraine |  |
| Aquitaine-Limousin-Poitou-Charentes |  |
| Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes |  |
| Bretagne | [Brittany](/wiki/Brittany) |
| Bourgogne Franche-Comté |  |
| Centre Val de Loire |  |
| Corse | [Corsica](/wiki/Corsica) |
| Languedoc-Roussillon Midi-Pyrénées |  |
| Normandie | [Normandy](/wiki/Normandy) |
| Nord-Pas-de-Calais Picardie |  |
| Île-de-France |  |
| Pays de la Loire |  |
| Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur |  |

The 22 regions of France (until 31December 2015):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **French Spelling** | **English Spelling** |
| Alsace | [Alsace](/wiki/Alsace) |
| Aquitaine | [Aquitaine](/wiki/Aquitaine) |
| Auvergne | [Auvergne](/wiki/Auvergne) |
| Bretagne | [Brittany](/wiki/Brittany) |
| Bourgogne | [Burgundy](/wiki/Burgundy) |
| Centre | Center |
| Champagne-Ardenne | Champagne-Ardenne |
| Corse | Corsica |
| Franche-Comté | Franche-comte |
| Languedoc-Roussillon | Languedoc-Roussillon |
| Limousin | Limousin |
| Lorraine | Lorraine |
| Basse-Normandie | Lower-Normandy |
| Midi-Pyrénées | Midi-Pyrenees |
| Nord-Pas-de-Calais | North-Calais |
| Île-de-France | Paris-Isle-of-France |
| Pays-de-la-Loire | Pays-de-la-Loire |
| Picardie | [Picardy](/wiki/Picardy) |
| Poitou-Charentes | Poitou-Charentes |
| Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur | Provence-Alpes-Azur |
| Rhône-Alpes | Rhone-Alps |
| Haute-Normandie | Upper-Normandy |

### Overseas territories and collectivities[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

In addition to the 18 regions and 101 departments, the French Republic has five [overseas collectivities](/wiki/Overseas_collectivity) ([French Polynesia](/wiki/French_Polynesia), [Saint Barthélemy](/wiki/Saint_Barthélemy), [Saint Martin](/wiki/Collectivity_of_Saint_Martin), [Saint Pierre and Miquelon](/wiki/Saint_Pierre_and_Miquelon), and [Wallis and Futuna](/wiki/Wallis_and_Futuna)), one [*sui generis*](/wiki/Sui_generis) collectivity ([New Caledonia](/wiki/New_Caledonia)), one [overseas territory](/wiki/Overseas_territory_(France)) ([French Southern and Antarctic Lands](/wiki/French_Southern_and_Antarctic_Lands)), and one island possession in the Pacific Ocean ([Clipperton Island](/wiki/Clipperton_Island)). [thumb|alt=diagram of the overseas territories of France showing map shapes|The lands making up the French Republic, shown at the same](/wiki/File:France-Constituent-Lands.png) [geographic scale](/wiki/Scale_(map)).

Overseas collectivities and territories form part of the French Republic, but do not form part of the European Union or its fiscal area (with the exception of St. Bartelemy, which seceded from Guadeloupe in 2007). The Pacific Collectivities (COMs) of French Polynesia, Wallis and Fortuna, and New Caledonia continue to use the [CFP franc](/wiki/CFP_franc)[[94]](#cite_note-94) whose value is strictly linked to that of the euro. In contrast, the five overseas regions used the French franc and now use the euro.[[95]](#cite_note-95)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Constitutional status** | **Capital** |
| [Template:Flag](/wiki/Template:Flag) | State private property under the direct authority of the [French government](/wiki/Minister_of_Overseas_France) | [***Uninhabited***](/wiki/Uninhabited) |
| [Template:Flag](/wiki/Template:Flag) | Designated as an overseas land (*pays d'outre-mer* or POM), the status is the same as an overseas collectivity. | [**Papeete**](/wiki/Papeete) |
| [Template:Flag](/wiki/Template:Flag) | Overseas territory (*territoire d'outre-mer* or TOM) | [**Port-aux-Français**](/wiki/Port-aux-Français) |
| [Template:Flag](/wiki/Template:Flag) | [*Sui generis*](/wiki/Sui_generis) collectivity | [**Nouméa**](/wiki/Nouméa) |
| [Template:Flag](/wiki/Template:Flag) | Overseas collectivity (*collectivité d'outre-mer* or COM) | [**Gustavia**](/wiki/Gustavia,_Saint_Barthélemy) |
| [Template:Flag](/wiki/Template:Flag) | Overseas collectivity (*collectivité d'outre-mer* or COM) | [**Marigot**](/wiki/Marigot,_Saint_Martin) |
| [Template:Flag](/wiki/Template:Flag) | Overseas collectivity (*collectivité d'outre-mer* or COM). Still referred to as a *collectivité territoriale*. | [**Saint-Pierre**](/wiki/Saint-Pierre,_Saint_Pierre_and_Miquelon) |
| [Template:Flag](/wiki/Template:Flag) | Overseas collectivity (*collectivité d'outre-mer* or COM). Still referred to as a *territoire*. | [**Mata-Utu**](/wiki/Mata-Utu) |

## Politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

### Government[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[thumb|upright|alt=head shot of François Hollande with blue tie|](/wiki/File:François_Hollande_(Journées_de_Nantes_2012).jpg)[François Hollande](/wiki/François_Hollande), elected [President of the French Republic](/wiki/President_of_France) in April 2012.[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

The French Republic is a [unitary](/wiki/Unitary_state) [semi-presidential](/wiki/Semi-presidential_system) republic with strong democratic traditions.[[96]](#cite_note-96) The constitution of the Fifth Republic was approved by [referendum](/wiki/Referendum) on 28 September 1958.[[97]](#cite_note-97) It greatly strengthened the authority of the executive in relation to parliament. The executive branch itself has two leaders: the [President of the Republic](/wiki/President_of_France), currently [François Hollande](/wiki/François_Hollande), who is [head of state](/wiki/Head_of_state) and is elected directly by universal adult suffrage for a 5-year term (formerly 7 years),[[98]](#cite_note-98) and the Government, led by the president-appointed [Prime Minister](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_France), currently [Manuel Valls](/wiki/Manuel_Valls).

The French [parliament](/wiki/French_Parliament) is a [bicameral](/wiki/Bicameralism) legislature comprising a [National Assembly](/wiki/National_Assembly_(France)) (*Assemblée Nationale*) and a [Senate](/wiki/Senate_(France)).[[99]](#cite_note-99) The National Assembly deputies represent local constituencies and are directly elected for 5-year terms.[[100]](#cite_note-100) The Assembly has the power to dismiss the government, and thus the majority in the Assembly determines the choice of government. Senators are chosen by an electoral college for 6-year terms (originally 9-year terms), and one half of the seats are submitted to election every 3 years starting in September 2008.[[101]](#cite_note-101) The Senate's legislative powers are limited; in the event of disagreement between the two chambers, the National Assembly has the final say.[[102]](#cite_note-102) The government has a strong influence in shaping the agenda of Parliament.

French politics are characterised by two politically opposed groupings: one left-wing, centred on the [French Socialist Party](/wiki/Socialist_Party_(France)), and the other right-wing, centred previously around the [Rassemblement pour la République (RPR)](/wiki/Rally_for_the_Republic), then its successor the UMP [Union for a Popular Movement](/wiki/Union_for_a_Popular_Movement) (UMP), which in 2015 was renamed Les Républicains.[[103]](#cite_note-103) Since the 2012 elections, the executive branch is currently composed mostly of the Socialist Party.

### Law[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) France uses a [civil legal](/wiki/Civil_law_(legal_system)) system;[[67]](#cite_note-67) that is, law arises primarily from written statutes; judges are not to make law, but merely to interpret it (though the amount of judicial interpretation in certain areas makes it equivalent to [case law](/wiki/Case_law)). Basic principles of the [rule of law](/wiki/Rule_of_law) were laid in the [Napoleonic Code](/wiki/Napoleonic_Code) (which was, in turn, largely based on the royal law codified under [Louis XIV](/wiki/Louis_XIV_of_France)). In agreement with the principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, law should only prohibit actions detrimental to society. As [Guy Canivet](/wiki/Guy_Canivet), first president of the [Court of Cassation](/wiki/Court_of_Cassation_(France)), wrote about the management of prisons: *Freedom is the rule, and its restriction is the exception; any restriction of Freedom must be provided for by Law and must follow the principles of necessity and proportionality.* That is, Law should lay out prohibitions only if they are needed, and if the inconveniences caused by this restriction do not exceed the inconveniences that the prohibition is supposed to remedy. [thumb|upright|alt=color drawing of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen from 1789|The basic principles that the French Republic must respect are found in the 1789](/wiki/File:Declaration_of_Human_Rights.jpg) [Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen](/wiki/Declaration_of_the_Rights_of_Man_and_of_the_Citizen).

French law is divided into two principal areas: [private law](/wiki/Private_law) and [public law](/wiki/Public_law). Private law includes, in particular, [civil law](/wiki/Civil_law_(common_law)) and [criminal law](/wiki/Criminal_law). Public law includes, in particular, [administrative law](/wiki/Administrative_law) and [constitutional law](/wiki/Constitutional_law). However, in practical terms, French law comprises three principal areas of law: civil law, criminal law, and administrative law. Criminal laws can only address the future and not the past (criminal [*ex post facto*](/wiki/Ex_post_facto_law) laws are prohibited).[[104]](#cite_note-104) While administrative law is often a subcategory of civil law in many countries, it is completely separated in France and each body of law is headed by a specific supreme court: ordinary courts (which handle criminal and civil litigation) are headed by the [Court of Cassation](/wiki/Court_of_Cassation_(France)) and administrative courts are headed by the [Council of State](/wiki/Conseil_d'Etat_(France)).

To be applicable, every law must be officially published in the [*Journal officiel de la République française*](/wiki/Journal_officiel_de_la_République_française).

France does not recognize [religious law](/wiki/Religious_law) as a motivation for the enactment of prohibitions. France has long had neither [blasphemy](/wiki/Blasphemy) laws nor [sodomy laws](/wiki/Sodomy_law) (the latter being abolished in 1791). However, "offenses against [public decency](/wiki/Decency)" (*contraires aux bonnes mœurs*) or [disturbing public order](/wiki/Breach_of_the_peace) (*trouble à l'ordre public*) have been used to repress public expressions of homosexuality or street prostitution. Since 1999, [civil unions](/wiki/Pacte_civil_de_solidarité) for homosexual couples are permitted, and since May 2013, [same-sex marriage](/wiki/Same-sex_marriage) and [LGBT adoption](/wiki/LGBT_adoption) are legal in France.[[105]](#cite_note-105) Laws prohibiting discriminatory speech in the press are [as old as 1881](/wiki/Law_on_the_Freedom_of_the_Press_of_29_July_1881). Some consider however that [hate speech laws in France](/wiki/Hate_speech_laws_in_France) are too broad or severe and damage [freedom of speech](/wiki/Freedom_of_speech).[[106]](#cite_note-106)France has laws against [racism](/wiki/Racism) and [antisemitism](/wiki/Antisemitism).[[107]](#cite_note-107) Since 1990, the [Gayssot Act](/wiki/Gayssot_Act) prohibits [Holocaust denial](/wiki/Holocaust_denial).

France's attitude towards [freedom of religion](/wiki/Freedom_of_religion_in_France) is complex. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitutional rights set forth in the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. However, since the [1905 French law on the Separation of the Churches and the State](/wiki/1905_French_law_on_the_Separation_of_the_Churches_and_the_State), the State tries to prevent its policy-making from being influenced by religion and became suspicious in recent decades towards new religious tendencies of the French society: the Parliament has [listed many religious movements as dangerous cults](/wiki/Groups_referred_to_as_cults_in_government_reports#France) since 1995, and has [banned wearing conspicuous religious symbols in schools](/wiki/French_law_on_secularity_and_conspicuous_religious_symbols_in_schools) since 2004. In 2010, it banned the [wearing of face-covering Islamic veils in public](/wiki/French_ban_on_face_covering). As some have complained that they have suffered from discrimination thus, and after criticism by human rights groups such as [Amnesty International](/wiki/Amnesty_International) and [Human Rights Watch](/wiki/Human_Rights_Watch),[[108]](#cite_note-108)[[109]](#cite_note-109) these laws remain controversial, although they are supported by most of the population.[[110]](#cite_note-110)

### Foreign relations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

[thumb|right|alt=François Mitterrand Chancellor Helmut Kohl, 24 September 1987 at press conference with microphones|French President](/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv_B_145_Bild-F076314-0006,_Manching,_Manöver_Frankreich-Deutschland.jpg) [François Mitterrand](/wiki/François_Mitterrand) and [West German](/wiki/West_Germany) Chancellor [Helmut Kohl](/wiki/Helmut_Kohl), in 1987. France is a founding member of the [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations) and serves as one of the [permanent members of the UN Security Council](/wiki/Permanent_members_of_the_United_Nations_Security_Council) with veto rights.[[111]](#cite_note-111) In 2015, France was described as being "the best networked state in the world", because it is a country that "is member of more multi-lateral organisations than any other country".[[112]](#cite_note-112) France is a member of the [G8](/wiki/G8), [World Trade Organization](/wiki/World_Trade_Organization) (WTO),[[113]](#cite_note-113) the [Secretariat of the Pacific Community](/wiki/Secretariat_of_the_Pacific_Community) (SPC)[[114]](#cite_note-114) and the [Indian Ocean Commission](/wiki/Indian_Ocean_Commission) (COI).[[115]](#cite_note-115) It is an associate member of the [Association of Caribbean States](/wiki/Association_of_Caribbean_States) (ACS)[[116]](#cite_note-116) and a leading member of the [International Francophone Organisation](/wiki/Organisation_internationale_de_la_Francophonie) (OIF) of fifty-one fully or partly French-speaking countries.[[117]](#cite_note-117) As a significant hub for international relations, France hosts the [second largest assembly](/wiki/List_of_diplomatic_missions_of_France) of [diplomatic missions](/wiki/Diplomatic_mission) in the world and the headquarters of [international organizations](/wiki/International_organization) including the [OECD](/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development), [UNESCO](/wiki/UNESCO), [Interpol](/wiki/Interpol), the [International Bureau of Weights and Measures](/wiki/International_Bureau_of_Weights_and_Measures), and [*la Francophonie*](/wiki/Organisation_internationale_de_la_Francophonie).[[118]](#cite_note-118) Postwar French foreign policy has been largely shaped by membership of the European Union, of which it was a [founding member](/wiki/Inner_Six). Since the [1960s](/wiki/Élysée_Treaty), France has developed close ties with reunified Germany to become the [most influential driving force of the EU](/wiki/France–Germany_relations).[[119]](#cite_note-119) In the 1960s, France sought to exclude the British from the European unification process,[[120]](#cite_note-120) seeking to build its own standing in continental Europe. However, since 1904, France has maintained an "[Entente cordiale](/wiki/Entente_cordiale)" with the [United Kingdom](/wiki/United_Kingdom), and there has been a strengthening of links between the countries, especially [militarily](/wiki/Defence_and_Security_Co-operation_Treaty).

[thumb|left|alt=European Parliament opening in Strasbourg with crowd and many countries' flags on flagpoles|The](/wiki/File:Inauguration_EYE2014_Parlement_européen_Strasbourg_9_mai_2014.jpg) [European Parliament](/wiki/European_Parliament) in [Strasbourg](/wiki/Strasbourg), near the border with [Germany](/wiki/Germany). France is a founding member of all EU institutions.

France is a member of the [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation](/wiki/North_Atlantic_Treaty_Organisation) (NATO), but under President de Gaulle, it excluded itself from the joint military command to protest the [special relationship](/wiki/Special_Relationship) between the United States and Britain and to preserve the independence of French foreign and security policies.[[121]](#cite_note-121) France vigorously opposed the [2003 invasion of Iraq](/wiki/2003_invasion_of_Iraq),[[122]](#cite_note-122)[[123]](#cite_note-123) straining bilateral relations with the US[[124]](#cite_note-124)[[125]](#cite_note-125) and the UK.[[126]](#cite_note-126) However, as a result of Nicolas Sarkozy's *pro-American* politics (much criticised in France by the leftists and by a part of the right),[[127]](#cite_note-127)[[128]](#cite_note-128) France rejoined the NATO joint military command on 4 April 2009.

In the early 1990s, the country drew considerable criticism from other nations for its underground nuclear tests in [French Polynesia](/wiki/French_Polynesia).[[129]](#cite_note-129) France retains strong political and economic influence in its [former African colonies](/wiki/Second_French_colonial_empire) ([Françafrique](/wiki/Françafrique))[[130]](#cite_note-130) and has supplied economic aid and troops for peace-keeping missions in [Ivory Coast](/wiki/Ivory_Coast) and [Chad](/wiki/Chad).[[131]](#cite_note-131) Recently, after the unilateral declaration of independence of northern [Mali](/wiki/Mali) by the [Tuareg](/wiki/Tuareg_rebellion_(2012)) [MNLA](/wiki/National_Movement_for_the_Liberation_of_Azawad) and the subsequent regional [Northern Mali conflict](/wiki/Northern_Mali_conflict) with several Islamist groups including [Ansar Dine](/wiki/Ansar_Dine) and [MOJWA](/wiki/Movement_for_Oneness_and_Jihad_in_West_Africa), France and other African states intervened to help the Malian Army to retake control.

In 2013, France was the fourth largest (in absolute terms) donor of [development aid](/wiki/Development_aid) in the world, behind the US, the UK and Germany. This represents 0.36% of its GDP, in this regard rating France as twelfth largest donor on the list.[[132]](#cite_note-132) The organisation managing the French help is the [French Development Agency](/wiki/French_Development_Agency), which finances primarily humanitarian projects in [sub-Saharan Africa](/wiki/Sub-Saharan_Africa).[[133]](#cite_note-133) The main goals of this help are "developing infrastructure, access to health care and education, the implementation of appropriate economic policies and the consolidation of the rule of law and democracy".<ref name = aid>[France priorities](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france-priorities_1/index.html) – France Diplomatie</ref>

### Military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

[thumb|300px|alt=see description|Examples of France's military. Clockwise from top left: Nuclear aircraft carrier](/wiki/File:French_military_images.jpg) [*Charles de Gaulle*](/wiki/French_aircraft_carrier_Charles_de_Gaulle_(R91)); A [Rafale](/wiki/Dassault_Rafale) [fighter aircraft](/wiki/Fighter_aircraft); French [Chasseurs Alpins](/wiki/Chasseurs_Alpins) patrolling the valleys of Kapisa province in Afghanistan; a [Leclerc tank](/wiki/AMX-56_Leclerc) in Paris for the [14 July](/wiki/Bastille_Day) [Bastille Day Military Parade](/wiki/Bastille_Day_Military_Parade).

The French Armed Forces (*Forces armées françaises*) are the military and paramilitary forces of France, under the [president](/wiki/President_of_France) as supreme commander. They consist of the [French Army](/wiki/French_Army) (*Armée de Terre*), [French Navy](/wiki/French_Navy) (*Marine Nationale*, formerly called *Armée de Mer*), the [French Air Force](/wiki/French_Air_Force) (*Armée de l'Air*), the French Strategic Nuclear Force (*Force Nucléaire Stratégique*, nicknamed *Force de Frappe* or "Strike Force") and the Military Police called [National Gendarmerie](/wiki/National_Gendarmerie) (*Gendarmerie nationale*), which also fulfils civil police duties in the rural areas of France. Together they are among the [largest armed forces](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_troops) in the world and the largest in the [EU](/wiki/EU).

While the Gendarmerie is an integral part of the French armed forces (gendarmes are career soldiers), and therefore under the purview of the [Ministry of Defence](/wiki/Minister_of_Defense_(France)), it is operationally attached to the [Ministry of the Interior](/wiki/Minister_of_the_Interior_(France)) as far as its civil police duties are concerned.

When acting as general purpose police force, the Gendarmerie encompasses the counter terrorist units of the [Parachute Intervention Squadron of the National Gendarmerie](/wiki/Parachute_Intervention_Squadron_of_the_National_Gendarmerie) (*Escadron Parachutiste d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale*), the [National Gendarmerie Intervention Group](/wiki/National_Gendarmerie_Intervention_Group) (*Groupe d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale*), the Search Sections of the National Gendarmerie (*Sections de Recherche de la Gendarmerie Nationale*), responsible for criminal enquiries, and the Mobile Brigades of the National Gendarmerie (*Brigades mobiles de la Gendarmerie Nationale*, or in short *Gendarmerie mobile*) which have the task to maintain public order.

The following special units are also part of the Gendarmerie: The Republican Guard (*Garde républicaine*) which protects public buildings hosting major French institutions, the Maritime Gendarmerie (*Gendarmerie maritime*) serving as Coast Guard, the Provost Service (*Prévôté*), acting as the Military Police branch of the Gendarmerie.

As far as the French intelligence units are concerned, the [Directorate-General for External Security](/wiki/Directorate-General_for_External_Security) (*Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure*) is considered to be a component of the Armed Forces under the authority of the Ministry of Defence. The other, the Central Directorate for Interior Intelligence (*Direction centrale du renseignement intérieur*) is a division of the National Police Force (*Direction générale de la Police Nationale*), and therefore reports directly to the Ministry of the Interior. There has been no national [conscription](/wiki/Conscription) since 1997.[[134]](#cite_note-134) France has a special military corps, the [French Foreign Legion](/wiki/French_Foreign_Legion), founded in 1830, which consists of foreign nationals from over 140 countries who are willing to serve in the French Armed Forces and become French citizens after the end of their service period. The only other countries having similar units are Spain (the Spanish Foreign Legion, called *Tercio*, was founded in 1920) and Luxembourg (foreigners can serve in the National Army provided they speak Luxembourgish).

France is a [permanent member of the Security Council of the UN](/wiki/Big_Five_(United_Nations)), and a [recognised nuclear state](/wiki/List_of_states_with_nuclear_weapons#Five_nuclear-weapon_states_under_the_NPT) since 1960. France has signed and ratified the [Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty](/wiki/Comprehensive_Nuclear-Test-Ban_Treaty) (CTBT)[[135]](#cite_note-135) and acceded to the [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty](/wiki/Nuclear_Non-Proliferation_Treaty). France's annual military expenditure in 2011 was US$62.5 billion, or 2.3%, of its GDP making it the [fifth biggest military spender in the world](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_military_expenditures) after the United States, China, Russia, and the United Kingdom.[[136]](#cite_note-136) French nuclear deterrence, (formerly known as "[*Force de Frappe*](/wiki/Force_de_Frappe)"), relies on complete independence. The current French nuclear force consists of four [*Triomphant*](/wiki/Triomphant_class_submarine) class submarines equipped with [submarine-launched ballistic missiles](/wiki/Submarine-launched_ballistic_missile). In addition to the submarine fleet, it is estimated that France has about 60 [*ASMP*](/wiki/Air-Sol_Moyenne_Portée) medium-range [air-to-ground missiles](/wiki/Air-to-surface_missile) with [nuclear warheads](/wiki/Nuclear_weapon),[[137]](#cite_note-137) of which around 50 are deployed by the Air Force using the [Mirage 2000N](/wiki/Dassault_Mirage_2000N/2000D) long-range nuclear strike aircraft, while around 10 are deployed by the French Navy's [Super Étendard Modernisé (SEM)](/wiki/Dassault-Breguet_Super_Étendard) attack aircraft, which operate from the nuclear-powered [aircraft carrier](/wiki/Aircraft_carrier) [*Charles de Gaulle*](/wiki/French_aircraft_carrier_Charles_de_Gaulle_(R91)). The new [Rafale F3](/wiki/Dassault_Rafale) aircraft will gradually replace all Mirage 2000N and SEM in the nuclear strike role with the improved *ASMP-A* missile with a nuclear warhead.

France has major military industries with one of the largest [aerospace industries](/wiki/Aerospace_manufacturer) in the world.[[138]](#cite_note-138)[[139]](#cite_note-139) Its industries have produced such equipment as the Rafale fighter, the *Charles de Gaulle* aircraft carrier, the [Exocet](/wiki/Exocet) missile and the [Leclerc](/wiki/AMX-56_Leclerc) tank among others. Despite withdrawing from the [Eurofighter](/wiki/Eurofighter_Typhoon) project, France is actively investing in European joint projects such as the [Eurocopter Tiger](/wiki/Eurocopter_Tiger), [multipurpose frigates](/wiki/FREMM_multipurpose_frigate), the [UCAV](/wiki/Unmanned_combat_air_vehicle) demonstrator [nEUROn](/wiki/Dassault_nEUROn) and the [Airbus A400M](/wiki/Airbus_A400M). France is a major arms seller,[[140]](#cite_note-140)[[141]](#cite_note-141) with most of its arsenal's designs available for the export market with the notable exception of nuclear-powered devices.

The [military parade](/wiki/Bastille_Day_Military_Parade) held in Paris each 14 July for [France's national day](/wiki/Bastille_Day), called *Bastille Day* in English-speaking countries (but not in France), is the oldest and largest regular military parade in Europe.[[142]](#cite_note-142)

### Government finance[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

In April and May 2012, France held a [presidential election](/wiki/French_presidential_election,_2012) in which the winner, [François Hollande](/wiki/François_Hollande), had opposed [austerity](/wiki/Austerity) measures, promising to eliminate France's budget deficit by 2017. The new government stated that it aimed to cancel recently enacted tax cuts and exemptions for the wealthy, raising the top tax bracket rate to 75% on incomes over a million euros, restoring the retirement age to 60 with a full pension for those who have worked 42 years, restoring 60,000 jobs recently cut from public education, regulating rent increases; and building additional public housing for the poor.

In June, Hollande's [Socialist Party](/wiki/Socialist_Party_(France)) won a supermajority in [legislative elections](/wiki/French_legislative_election,_2012) capable of amending the [French Constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_France) and enabling the immediate enactment of the promised reforms. French government bond interest rates fell 30% to record lows,[[143]](#cite_note-143) less than 50 [basis points](/wiki/Basis_point) above German government bond rates.[[144]](#cite_note-144) Under European Union rules, member states are supposed to limit their debt to 60% of output or be reducing the ratio structurally towards this ceiling, and run public deficits of no more than 3% of GDP. The French government has run a [budget deficit](/wiki/Budget_deficit) each year since the early 1970s. In 2012, French government debt levels reached 1.8 trillion euros, the equivalent of 90% of French GDP.[[145]](#cite_note-145) In late 2012, [credit rating agencies](/wiki/Credit_rating_agencies) warned that growing French government debt levels risked [France's AAA credit rating](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_credit_rating), raising the possibility of a future downgrade and subsequent higher borrowing costs for the French government.[[146]](#cite_note-146)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

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A member of the [Group of 7](/wiki/G7) (formerly G8) leading industrialised countries, [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), it is ranked as the world's [ninth largest](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)) and the EU's second largest economy by [purchasing power parity](/wiki/Purchasing_power_parity).[[5]](#cite_note-5) With 31 of the 500 biggest companies in the world in 2015, France ranks fourth in the [Fortune Global 500](/wiki/Fortune_Global_500), ahead of Germany and the UK.[[147]](#cite_note-147) France joined 11 other EU members to launch the euro in 1999, with [euro coins](/wiki/Euro_coins) and [banknotes](/wiki/Euro_banknotes) completely replacing the [French franc](/wiki/French_franc) (₣) in 2002.[[148]](#cite_note-148) [thumb|alt=European map of Eurozone monetary union|France is part of a monetary union, the](/wiki/File:BlueEurozone.svg) [Eurozone](/wiki/Eurozone) (dark blue), and of the [EU single market](/wiki/Internal_Market_(European_Union)).

France has a [mixed economy](/wiki/Mixed_economy) that combines extensive private enterprise[[149]](#cite_note-149)[[150]](#cite_note-150) with substantial state enterprise and government intervention. The government retains considerable influence over key segments of infrastructure sectors, with majority ownership of railway, electricity, aircraft, nuclear power and telecommunications.[[67]](#cite_note-67)[Template:Failed verification](/wiki/Template:Failed_verification) It has been relaxing its control over these sectors since the early [1990s](/wiki/1990s_in_economics).[[67]](#cite_note-67)[Template:Failed verification](/wiki/Template:Failed_verification) The government is slowly [corporatising](/wiki/Corporatization) the state sector and selling off holdings in [France Télécom](/wiki/Orange_S.A.), [Air France](/wiki/Air_France), as well as in the insurance, banking, and defence industries.[[67]](#cite_note-67)[Template:Failed verification](/wiki/Template:Failed_verification) France has an important aerospace industry led by the European consortium [Airbus](/wiki/Airbus), and has its own national [spaceport](/wiki/Spaceport), the [*Centre Spatial Guyanais*](/wiki/Centre_Spatial_Guyanais).

According to the [World Trade Organization](/wiki/World_Trade_Organization) (WTO), in 2009 France was the world's sixth largest exporter and the fourth largest importer of manufactured goods.[[151]](#cite_note-151) In 2008, France was the third largest recipient of [foreign direct investment](/wiki/Foreign_direct_investment) among OECD countries at $118 billion, ranking behind Luxembourg (where foreign direct investment was essentially monetary transfers to banks located there) and the US ($316 billion), but above the UK ($96.9 billion), Germany ($25 billion), or Japan ($24 billion).<ref name=FDI>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref><ref name=FDI2>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

In the same year, French companies invested $220 billion outside France, ranking France as the second largest outward direct investor in the OECD, behind the US ($311 billion), and ahead of the UK ($111 billion), Japan ($128 billion) and Germany ($157 billion).[[152]](#cite_note-152)[[153]](#cite_note-153) Financial services, banking and the insurance sector are an important part of the economy. The Paris stock exchange ([Template:Lang-fr](/wiki/Template:Lang-fr)) is an old institution, created by [Louis XV](/wiki/Louis_XV_of_France) in 1724.[[154]](#cite_note-154) In 2000, the stock exchanges of Paris, Amsterdam and Bruxelles merged into [Euronext](/wiki/Euronext).<ref name = banque>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> In 2007, Euronext merged with the [New York stock exchange](/wiki/New_York_stock_exchange) to form [NYSE Euronext](/wiki/NYSE_Euronext), the world's largest stock exchange.[[155]](#cite_note-155) [Euronext Paris](/wiki/Euronext_Paris), the French branch of the NYSE Euronext group is Europe's 2nd largest stock exchange market, behind the [London Stock Exchange](/wiki/London_Stock_Exchange).

France is part of the European single market which represents more than 500 million consumers. Several domestic commercial policies are determined by agreements among European Union (EU) members and by EU legislation. France introduced the common European currency, the [Euro](/wiki/Euro) in 2002.<ref name=euroc>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>[[156]](#cite_note-156) It is a member of the Eurozone which represents around 330 million citizens.

French companies have maintained key positions in the insurance and banking industries: [AXA](/wiki/AXA) is the world's largest insurance company. The leading French banks are [BNP Paribas](/wiki/BNP_Paribas) and the [Crédit Agricole](/wiki/Crédit_Agricole), ranking as the world's first and sixth largest banks in 2010[[157]](#cite_note-157) (by assets), while the [Société Générale](/wiki/Société_Générale) group was ranked the world's eighth largest in 2009.

### Agriculture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

[thumb|upright|alt=Champagne wine in a flute|](/wiki/File:Glass_of_champagne.jpg)[Champagne](/wiki/Champagne_wine), widely regarded as a [luxury good](/wiki/Luxury_good), originates from the [Champagne region](/wiki/Champagne_region) in northeast France.

France has historically been a large producer of agricultural products.<ref name = agriculture>[France – Agriculture](http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Europe/France-AGRICULTURE.html) – Encyclopedia of the Nations</ref> Extensive tracts of fertile land, the application of modern technology, and [EU subsidies](/wiki/Common_agricultural_policy) have combined to make France the leading agricultural producer and exporter in Europe[[158]](#cite_note-158) (representing 20% of the EU's agricultural production[[159]](#cite_note-159)) and the world's third biggest exporter of agricultural products.[[160]](#cite_note-160) Wheat, poultry, dairy, beef, and pork, as well as internationally recognized processed foods are the primary French agricultural exports. [Rosé](/wiki/Rosé) wines are primarily consumed within the country, but [Champagne](/wiki/Champagne_(wine)) and [Bordeaux](/wiki/Bordeaux_wine) wines are major exports, being known worldwide. EU agriculture subsidies to France have decreased in recent years but still amounted to $8 billion in 2007.[[161]](#cite_note-161) That same year, France sold 33.4 billion euros of transformed agricultural products.[[162]](#cite_note-162) Agriculture is an important sector of France's economy: 3.8% of the active population is employed in agriculture, whereas the total agri-food industry made up 4.2% of French GDP in 2005.[[159]](#cite_note-159)

### Tourism[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|alt=Mona Lisa, La Joconde in the Louvre Museum |The](/wiki/File:Mona_Lisa,_by_Leonardo_da_Vinci,_from_C2RMF_retouched.jpg) [Mona Lisa](/wiki/Mona_Lisa) is the World's best known work of art,[[163]](#cite_note-163) on permanent display at the [Louvre](/wiki/Louvre), the World's most visited museum.[[164]](#cite_note-164)

With 83 million foreign tourists in 2012,[[3]](#cite_note-3) France is [ranked](/wiki/World_Tourism_rankings) as the first tourist destination in the world, ahead of the US (67 million) and China (58 million). This 83 million figure excludes people staying less than 24 hours, such as North Europeans crossing France on their way to Spain or Italy. It is third in income from tourism due to shorter duration of visits.[[165]](#cite_note-165) France has 37 sites inscribed in [UNESCO's World Heritage List](/wiki/List_of_World_Heritage_Sites_in_France) and features cities of high cultural interest, beaches and seaside resorts, [ski](/wiki/Ski) resorts, and rural regions that many enjoy for their beauty and tranquillity ([green tourism](/wiki/Ecotourism)). Small and picturesque French villages are promoted through the association [*Les Plus Beaux Villages de France*](/wiki/Les_Plus_Beaux_Villages_de_France) (litt. "The Most Beautiful Villages of France"). The "[Remarkable Gardens](/wiki/Remarkable_Gardens_of_France)" label is a list of the over 200 gardens classified by the [French Ministry of Culture](/wiki/Minister_of_Culture_(France)). This label is intended to protect and promote remarkable gardens and [parks](/wiki/Park). France attracts many religious pilgrims on their [way to St. James](/wiki/Way_of_St._James), or to [Lourdes](/wiki/Lourdes), a town in the [Hautes-Pyrénées](/wiki/Hautes-Pyrénées) that hosts several million visitors a year.

[thumb|left|alt=Mont Saint-Michel a hill monastery in a wetland, with the tide out|The](/wiki/File:Le_Mont_Saint-Michel.jpg) [Mont Saint-Michel](/wiki/Mont_Saint-Michel) is one of the most visited and recognisable landmarks in France. It is one of the 39 [UNESCO World Heritage Sites in France](/wiki/List_of_World_Heritage_Sites_in_France).

France, especially Paris, has some of the world's largest and renowned museums, including the [Louvre](/wiki/Musée_du_Louvre), which is the [most visited art museum in the world](/wiki/List_of_most_visited_art_museums_in_the_world), the [Musée d'Orsay](/wiki/Musée_d'Orsay), mostly devoted to [impressionism](/wiki/Impressionism), and [Beaubourg](/wiki/Centre_Georges_Pompidou), dedicated to [Contemporary art](/wiki/Contemporary_art). [Disneyland Paris](/wiki/Disneyland_Paris) is Europe's most popular theme park, with 15 million combined visitors to the resort's [Disneyland Park](/wiki/Disneyland_Park_(Paris)) and [Walt Disney Studios Park](/wiki/Walt_Disney_Studios_Park) in 2009.[[166]](#cite_note-166) With more than 10 millions tourists a year, the [French Riviera](/wiki/French_Riviera) (or *Côte d'Azur*), in south-east France, is the second leading tourist destination in the country, after the [Paris region](/wiki/Île-de-France_(region)).[[167]](#cite_note-167) It benefits from 300 days of sunshine per year, [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) of coastline and beaches, 18 golf courses, 14 ski resorts and 3,000 restaurants.[[168]](#cite_note-168) Each year the *Côte d'Azur* hosts 50% of the world's [superyacht](/wiki/Luxury_yacht) fleet.[[169]](#cite_note-169) Another major destination are the *Châteaux* of the [Loire Valley](/wiki/Loire_Valley), this [World Heritage Site](/wiki/World_Heritage_Site) is noteworthy for its architectural heritage, in its historic towns but in particular its castles (*châteaux*), such as the [Châteaux](/wiki/Château) d'[Amboise](/wiki/Château_d'Amboise), de Chambord, d'[Ussé](/wiki/Château_d'Ussé), de [Villandry](/wiki/Château_de_Villandry) and [Chenonceau](/wiki/Château_de_Chenonceau). The most popular tourist sites include: (according to a 2003 ranking[[170]](#cite_note-170) visitors per year): [Eiffel Tower](/wiki/Eiffel_Tower) (6.2 million), Louvre Museum (5.7 million), Palace of Versailles (2.8 million), Musée d'Orsay (2.1 million), [Arc de Triomphe](/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe) (1.2 million), [Centre Pompidou](/wiki/Centre_Georges_Pompidou) (1.2 million), [Mont Saint-Michel](/wiki/Mont_Saint-Michel) (1 million), Château de Chambord (711,000), [Sainte-Chapelle](/wiki/Sainte-Chapelle) (683,000), [Château du Haut-Kœnigsbourg](/wiki/Château_du_Haut-Kœnigsbourg) (549,000), [Puy de Dôme](/wiki/Puy_de_Dôme) (500,000), [Musée Picasso](/wiki/Musée_Picasso) (441,000), [Carcassonne](/wiki/Carcassonne) (362,000).

### Energy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [thumb|alt=Nuclear power plant in Cattenom, France four large cooling towers expelling white water vapor against a blue sky|France derives](/wiki/File:Nuclear_Power_Plant_Cattenom.jpg) [75% of its electricity from nuclear power](/wiki/Nuclear_power_in_France), the highest percentage in the world.[[171]](#cite_note-171) Photo of [Cattenom Nuclear Power Plant](/wiki/Cattenom_Nuclear_Power_Plant).

[Électricité de France](/wiki/Électricité_de_France) (EDF), the main [electricity](/wiki/Electricity) generation and distribution company in France, is also one of the world's largest producers of electricity. In 2003, it produced 22% of the [European Union's](/wiki/European_Union) electricity, primarily from [nuclear power](/wiki/Nuclear_power). France is the smallest emitter of [carbon dioxide](/wiki/Greenhouse_gas) among the [G8](/wiki/G8), due to its heavy investment in [nuclear power](/wiki/Nuclear_power).[[172]](#cite_note-172) As a result of large investments in nuclear technology, most electricity produced by France is generated by 59 nuclear power plants (75% in 2012).[[173]](#cite_note-173) In this context, renewable energies are having difficulty taking off. France also uses hydroelectric dams to produce electricity, such as the [Eguzon dam](/wiki/Eguzon_dam), [Étang de Soulcem](/wiki/Étang_de_Soulcem), and [Lac de Vouglans](/wiki/Lac_de_Vouglans).

### Transport[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) The [railway network of France](/wiki/Rail_transport_in_France), which [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of) stretches [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert)[[174]](#cite_note-174) is the second most extensive in Western Europe after that of [Germany](/wiki/Rail_transport_in_Germany).[[175]](#cite_note-175) It is operated by the [SNCF](/wiki/SNCF), and high-speed trains include the [Thalys](/wiki/Thalys), the [Eurostar](/wiki/Eurostar) and [TGV](/wiki/TGV), which travels at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in commercial use.[[176]](#cite_note-176) The Eurostar, along with the [Eurotunnel Shuttle](/wiki/Eurotunnel_Shuttle), connects with the United Kingdom through the [Channel Tunnel](/wiki/Channel_Tunnel). Rail connections exist to all other neighbouring countries in Europe, except [Andorra](/wiki/Andorra). Intra-urban connections are also well developed with both [underground services](/wiki/Rapid_transit) (Paris, Lyon, Lille, Marseille, Toulouse, Rennes) and tramway services (Nantes, Strasbourg, Bordeaux, Grenoble, Montpellier...) complementing bus services.

[thumb|left|alt=TGV Duplex silver and blue in the Gare de Lyon, Paris|A](/wiki/File:TGV-Duplex_Paris.jpg) [TGV Duplex](/wiki/TGV_Duplex), which can reach a maximum speed of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).

There are approximately [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) of serviceable roadway in France, ranking it the most extensive network of the European continent.[[177]](#cite_note-177) The Paris region is enveloped with the most dense network of roads and highways that connect it with virtually all parts of the country. French roads also handle substantial international traffic, connecting with cities in neighbouring Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Andorra and Monaco. There is no annual registration fee or [road tax](/wiki/Road_tax); however, usage of the mostly privately owned motorways is through tolls except in the vicinity of large communes. The new car market is dominated by domestic brands such as [Renault](/wiki/Renault) (27% of cars sold in France in 2003), [Peugeot](/wiki/Peugeot) (20.1%) and [Citroën](/wiki/Citroën) (13.5%).[[178]](#cite_note-178) Over 70% of new cars sold in 2004 had [diesel engines](/wiki/Diesel_engine), far more than contained petrol or [LPG](/wiki/Liquified_petroleum_gas) engines.[[179]](#cite_note-179) France possesses the [Millau Viaduct](/wiki/Millau_Viaduct), the world's tallest bridge,[[180]](#cite_note-180) and has built many important bridges such as the [Pont de Normandie](/wiki/Pont_de_Normandie).

There are 464 [airports](/wiki/List_of_airports_in_France) in France.<ref name=France>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> [Charles de Gaulle Airport](/wiki/Charles_de_Gaulle_Airport), located in the vicinity of Paris, is the largest and busiest airport in the country, handling the vast majority of popular and commercial traffic and connecting Paris with virtually all major cities across the world. [Air France](/wiki/Air_France) is the national carrier airline, although numerous private airline companies provide domestic and international travel services. There are ten major ports in France, the largest of which is in [Marseille](/wiki/Marseille),[[181]](#cite_note-181) which also is the largest bordering the Mediterranean Sea.[[182]](#cite_note-182)[[183]](#cite_note-183) [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) of waterways traverse France including the [Canal du Midi](/wiki/Canal_du_Midi), which connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean through the [Garonne](/wiki/Garonne) river.[[67]](#cite_note-67)

### Sciences[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|right|alt=Ariane four rocket taking off past the tower|France is one of the biggest contributors to the](/wiki/File:Ariane4.jpg) [European Space Agency](/wiki/European_Space_Agency) ([Ariane 4](/wiki/Ariane_4) launch pictured).

Since the [Middle Ages](/wiki/Middle_Ages), France has been a major contributor to scientific achievement. Around the beginning of the 11th century [Pope Sylvester II](/wiki/Pope_Sylvester_II), born Gerbert d'Aurillac, reintroduced the [abacus](/wiki/Abacus) and [armillary sphere](/wiki/Armillary_sphere), and introduced [Arabic numerals](/wiki/Arabic_numerals) and [clocks](/wiki/Clock) to northern and western Europe.[[184]](#cite_note-184) The [University of Paris](/wiki/University_of_Paris), founded in the mid-12th century, is still one of the most important universities in the Western world.[[185]](#cite_note-185) In the 17th century, [René Descartes](/wiki/René_Descartes) defined a [method for the acquisition of scientific knowledge](/wiki/Rationalism), while [Blaise Pascal](/wiki/Blaise_Pascal) became famous for his work on [probability](/wiki/Probability) and [fluid mechanics](/wiki/Fluid_mechanics). They were both key figures of the [Scientific revolution](/wiki/Scientific_revolution), which erupted in Europe during this period. The [Academy of Sciences](/wiki/French_Academy_of_Sciences) was founded by [Louis XIV](/wiki/Louis_XIV) to encourage and protect the spirit of [French](/wiki/French_people) [scientific research](/wiki/Scientific_method). It was at the forefront of scientific developments in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. It is one of the earliest [academies of sciences](/wiki/Academy_of_sciences).

The [Age of Enlightenment](/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment) was marked by the work of biologist [Buffon](/wiki/Georges-Louis_Leclerc,_Comte_de_Buffon) and chemist [Lavoisier](/wiki/Antoine_Lavoisier), who discovered the role of [oxygen](/wiki/Oxygen) in [combustion](/wiki/Combustion), while [Diderot](/wiki/Denis_Diderot) and [D'Alembert](/wiki/Jean_le_Rond_d'Alembert) published the [*Encyclopédie*](/wiki/Encyclopédie), which aimed to give access to "useful knowledge" to the people, a knowledge that they can apply to their everyday life.[[186]](#cite_note-186) With the [Industrial Revolution](/wiki/Industrial_Revolution), the 19th century saw spectacular scientific developments in France with scientists such as [Augustin Fresnel](/wiki/Augustin_Fresnel), founder of modern [optics](/wiki/Optics), [Sadi Carnot](/wiki/Nicolas_Léonard_Sadi_Carnot) who laid the foundations of [thermodynamics](/wiki/Thermodynamics), or [Louis Pasteur](/wiki/Louis_Pasteur), a pioneer of [microbiology](/wiki/Microbiology). Other eminent French scientists of the 19th century have their [names inscribed on the Eiffel Tower](/wiki/List_of_the_72_names_on_the_Eiffel_Tower).

Famous French scientists of the 20th century include the mathematician and physicist [Henri Poincaré](/wiki/Henri_Poincaré), physicists [Henri Becquerel](/wiki/Henri_Becquerel), [Pierre](/wiki/Pierre_Curie) and [Marie Curie](/wiki/Marie_Curie), remained famous for their work on [radioactivity](/wiki/Radioactivity), the physicist [Paul Langevin](/wiki/Paul_Langevin) or virologist [Luc Montagnier](/wiki/Luc_Montagnier), co-discoverer of [HIV AIDS](/wiki/HIV_AIDS). [Hand transplantation](/wiki/Hand_transplantation) was developed on 23 September 1998 in [Lyon](/wiki/Lyon,_France) by a team assembled from different countries around the world including [Jean-Michel Dubernard](/wiki/Jean-Michel_Dubernard) who, shortly thereafter, performed the first successful double hand transplant.[[187]](#cite_note-187) [Telesurgery](/wiki/Remote_surgery) was developed by [Jacques Marescaux](/wiki/Jacques_Marescaux) and his team on 7 September 2001 across the Atlantic Ocean (New-York-Strasbourg, [Lindbergh Operation](/wiki/Lindbergh_Operation)).<ref name=istmarescaux>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> A [face transplant](/wiki/Face_transplant) was first done on 27 November 2005[[188]](#cite_note-188)[[189]](#cite_note-189) by Dr [Bernard Devauchelle](/wiki/Bernard_Devauchelle).

France was the [fourth country to achieve nuclear capability](/wiki/Force_de_dissuasion)[[190]](#cite_note-190) and has the [third largest nuclear weapons arsenal](/wiki/List_of_states_with_nuclear_weapons) in the world.[[191]](#cite_note-191) It is also a leader in [civilian nuclear technology](/wiki/Nuclear_power_in_France).[[192]](#cite_note-192)[[193]](#cite_note-193)[[194]](#cite_note-194) France was the third nation, after the former [USSR](/wiki/USSR) and the [United States](/wiki/United_States), to launch its [own space satellite](/wiki/Diamant) and remains the biggest contributor to the [European Space Agency](/wiki/European_Space_Agency) (ESA).[[195]](#cite_note-195)[[196]](#cite_note-196)[[197]](#cite_note-197) The European [Airbus Group](/wiki/Airbus_Group), formed from the French group [Aérospatiale](/wiki/Aérospatiale) along with [DaimlerChrysler Aerospace](/wiki/DaimlerChrysler_Aerospace) AG (DASA) and [Construcciones Aeronáuticas SA](/wiki/Construcciones_Aeronáuticas_SA) (CASA), designs and develops civil and military aircraft as well as communications systems, missiles, space rockets, helicopters, satellites, and related systems. From 1970 [SNCF](/wiki/SNCF), the French national [railroad](/wiki/Railroad) company, has developed the [TGV](/wiki/TGV), a high speed train which holds a series of [world speed records](/wiki/Land_speed_record_for_railed_vehicles#Conventional_wheeled). The TGV has been the fastest wheeled train in commercial use since reaching a speed of *574.8 km/h (357.2 mph)* on 3 April 2007.[[198]](#cite_note-198) Western Europe is now serviced by a network of TGV lines.

[Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), [67 French](/wiki/List_of_Nobel_laureates_by_country) people have been awarded a [Nobel Prize](/wiki/Nobel_Prize)[[199]](#cite_note-199) and 12 have received the [Fields Medal](/wiki/Fields_Medal).[[200]](#cite_note-200)

## Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|alt=map of population in France|Population density in the French Republic at the 1999 census.](/wiki/File:France_population_density_40pc.png)

With an estimated total population of around 66.6 million people as of January 2016,[[201]](#cite_note-201) with 64.5 million in metropolitan France,<ref name=metropolitanINSEE>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> France is the [20th most populous country in the world](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population#List) and the third-most populous in Europe.

France is an outlier among developed countries in general, and European countries in particular, in having a fairly high rate of natural population growth: by birth rates alone, France was responsible for almost all natural population growth in the European Union in 2006, with the natural growth rate (excess of births over deaths) rising to 300,000.<ref name=evol>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> This was the highest rate since the end of the [baby boom](/wiki/Baby_boom) in 1973, and coincides with the rise of the [total fertility rate](/wiki/Total_fertility_rate) from a nadir of 1.7 in 1994 to 2.0 in 2010.<ref name=population>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>[[202]](#cite_note-202) From 2006 to 2011 population growth was on average +0.6% per year.[[203]](#cite_note-203) Immigrants are also major contributors to this trend; in 2010, 27% of newborns in metropolitan France had at least one [foreign-born](/wiki/Immigration_to_France#Immigration_per_region) parent and 24% had at least one parent born outside of Europe (parents born in overseas territories are considered as born in France).[[204]](#cite_note-204)

### Ethnic groups[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

Most [French people](/wiki/French_people) are of [Celtic](/wiki/Celtic_peoples) ([Gauls](/wiki/Gauls)) origin, with an admixture of [Latin](/wiki/Latin_peoples) ([Romans](/wiki/Roman_Empire)) and [Germanic](/wiki/Germanic_peoples) ([Franks](/wiki/Franks)) groups.[[205]](#cite_note-205) Different regions reflect this diverse heritage, with notable [Breton](/wiki/Bretons) elements in western France, [Aquitanian](/wiki/Aquitani) in the southwest, [Scandinavian](/wiki/Scandinavia) in the northwest, [Alemannic](/wiki/Alemanni) in the northeast and [Ligurian](/wiki/Ligures) influence in the southeast.

Large-scale [immigration](/wiki/Immigration) over the last century and a half has led to a more multicultural society. In 2004, the Institut Montaigne estimated that within Metropolitan France, 51 million people were White (85% of the population), 6 million were North African (10%), 2 million were Black (3.3%), and 1 million were Asian (1.7%).[[206]](#cite_note-206)[[207]](#cite_note-207) A law originating from the 1789 revolution and reaffirmed in the 1958 [French Constitution](/wiki/French_Constitution) makes it illegal for the French state to collect data on ethnicity and ancestry. In 2008, the TeO ("Trajectories and origins") poll conducted jointly by [INED](/wiki/INED) and [the French National Institute of Statistics](/wiki/INSEE)[[208]](#cite_note-208)[[209]](#cite_note-209) estimated that 5 million people were of [Italian](/wiki/Italians_in_France) ancestry (the largest immigrant community), followed by 3 million[[210]](#cite_note-210)[[211]](#cite_note-211) to 6 million[[212]](#cite_note-212) people of [North African](/wiki/Mahgreb) ancestry, 2.5 million people of [Sub-Saharan African](/wiki/Afro-French) origin, and 200,000 people of [Turkish](/wiki/Turks_in_France) ancestry.[[213]](#cite_note-213) There are also sizeable minorities of other [European ethnic groups](/wiki/European_ethnic_groups), namely [Spanish](/wiki/Spaniards), [Portuguese](/wiki/Portuguese_people), [Romani](/wiki/Romani_people_in_France), [Polish](/wiki/Poles), and [Greek](/wiki/Greeks).[[210]](#cite_note-210)[[214]](#cite_note-214)[[215]](#cite_note-215) It is currently estimated that 40% of the French population is descended at least partially from the different waves of immigration the country has received since the early 20th century;[[216]](#cite_note-216) between 1921 and 1935 alone, about 1.1 million net immigrants came to France.[[217]](#cite_note-217) The next largest wave came in the 1960s, when around 1.6 million [*pieds noirs*](/wiki/Pieds_noirs) returned to France following the independence of its North African possessions, [Algeria](/wiki/Algeria) and [Morocco](/wiki/Morocco).[[218]](#cite_note-218)[[219]](#cite_note-219) They were joined by numerous former colonial subjects from North and West Africa, as well as numerous immigrants from Spain and Portugal.

France remains a major destination for immigrants, accepting about 200,000 legal immigrants annually.[[220]](#cite_note-220) It is also Western Europe's leading recipient of [asylum](/wiki/Refugee) seekers, with an estimated 50,000 applications in 2005 (a 15% decrease from 2004).[[221]](#cite_note-221) The European Union allows free movement between the member states, although France established controls to curb [Eastern European](/wiki/Eastern_European) migration, and immigration remains a contentious political issue.

In 2008, the [INSEE](/wiki/INSEE) estimated that the total number of foreign-born immigrants was around 5 million (8% of the population), while their French-born descendants numbered 6.5 million, or 11% of the population. Thus, nearly a fifth of the country's population were either first or second-generation immigrants, of which more than 5 million where of European origin and 4 million of [Maghrebi](/wiki/Maghrebis) ancestry.[[222]](#cite_note-222)[[223]](#cite_note-223)[[224]](#cite_note-224) In 2008, France granted citizenship to 137,000 persons, mostly to people from Morocco, Algeria and Turkey.[[225]](#cite_note-225) In 2014 The National Institute of Statistics (INSEE, for its acronym in French) published a study on Thursday, according to which has doubled the number of Spanish immigrants, Portuguese and Italians in France between 2009 and 2012. According to the French Institute, this increase resulting from the financial crisis that hit several European countries in that period, has pushed up the number of Europeans installed in France.[[226]](#cite_note-226)Statistics on Spanish immigrants in France show a growth of 107 percent between 2009 and 2012, i.e. in this period went from 5300 to 11,000 people.[[226]](#cite_note-226)Of the total of 229,000 foreigners who were in France in 2012, nearly 8% were Portuguese, 5% British, 5% Spanish, 4% Italians, 4% Germans, 3% Romanians, and 3% Belgians.[[226]](#cite_note-226)

### Major cities[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

France is a highly urbanized country, with its [largest cities](/wiki/List_of_cities_in_France_over_20,000_population_(1999_census)) (in terms of metropolitan area population in 2013[[227]](#cite_note-227) The dominant position of French language in international affairs was overtaken by English, since the emergence of the US as a major power.[[40]](#cite_note-40)[[229]](#cite_note-229)[[230]](#cite_note-230) For most of the time in which French served as an international lingua franca, it was not the native language of most Frenchmen: a report in 1794 conducted by [Henri Grégoire](/wiki/Henri_Grégoire) found that of the country's 25 million people, only three million spoke French natively; the rest spoke one of the country's many regional languages, such as [Alsatian](/wiki/Alsatian_language), [Breton](/wiki/Breton_language) or [Occitan](/wiki/Occitan_language).[[231]](#cite_note-231) Through the expansion of public education, in which French was the sole language of instruction, as well as other factors such as increased urbanization and the rise of mass communication, French gradually came to be adopted by virtually the entire population, a process not completed until the 20th century.

As a result of France's extensive [colonial ambitions](/wiki/French_colonial_empire) between the 17th and 20th centuries, French was introduced to the Americas, Africa, Polynesia, South-East Asia, and the Caribbean. French is the second most studied foreign language in the world after English,[[232]](#cite_note-232) and is a lingua franca in some regions, notably in Africa. The legacy of French as a living language outside Europe is mixed: it is nearly extinct in some former French colonies (The Levant, South and Southeast Asia), while creoles and pidgins based on French have emerged in the French departments in the [West Indies](/wiki/West_Indies) and the South Pacific ([French Polynesia](/wiki/French_Polynesia)). On the other hand, many former French colonies have adopted French as an official language, and the total number of French speakers is increasing, especially in Africa.

It is estimated that between 300 million[[233]](#cite_note-233) and 500 million[[234]](#cite_note-234) people worldwide can speak French, either as a [mother tongue](/wiki/Mother_tongue) or a [second language](/wiki/Second_language).

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|alt=Notre-Dame de Reims facade, gothic stone cathedral against blue sky|](/wiki/File:Facade_de_la_Cathédrale_de_Reims_-_Parvis.jpg)[Notre-Dame de Reims](/wiki/Notre-Dame_de_Reims) is the Roman Catholic cathedral where the [kings of France were crowned](/wiki/Coronation_of_the_French_monarch) until 1825.[[235]](#cite_note-235) France is a [secular](/wiki/Secular) country, and [freedom of religion](/wiki/Freedom_of_religion) is a constitutional right. French religious policy is based on the concept of [*laïcité*](/wiki/Laïcité), a strict [separation of church and state](/wiki/Separation_of_church_and_state) under which public life is kept completely secular.

[Catholicism](/wiki/Catholicism) has been the predominant religion in France for more than a millennium, though it is not as actively practised today as it was. Among the 47,000 religious buildings in France, 94% are [Roman Catholic](/wiki/Roman_Catholic).[[236]](#cite_note-236) While in 1965, 81% of the French declared themselves to be Catholics, in 2009 this proportion was 64%. Moreover, while 27% of the French went to Mass once a week or more in 1952, only 5% did so in 2006.<ref name=catho>[Template:Fr icon](/wiki/Template:Fr_icon) [La France reste catholique mais moins pratiquante](http://www.la-croix.com/Religion/S-informer/Actualite/La-France-reste-catholique-mais-moins-pratiquante-_NG_-2009-12-29-570979) – La Croix. 29 December 2009</ref> The same survey found that [Protestants](/wiki/Protestantism) accounted for 3% of the population, an increase from previous surveys, and 5% adhered to other religions, with the remaining 28% stating they had no religion.[[237]](#cite_note-237) [Evangelical Protestantism](/wiki/Evangelical_Protestantism) may be the fastest growing religion in France.[[238]](#cite_note-238) The [French Revolution](/wiki/French_Revolution) saw a radical shift in the status of the Catholic Church with the launch of a brutal [campaign of de-Christianization](/wiki/Dechristianisation_of_France_during_the_French_Revolution). After the back and forth of Catholic royal and secular republican governments over the 19th century, *laïcité* was established with the [1905 law on the Separation of the Churches and the State](/wiki/1905_French_law_on_the_Separation_of_the_Churches_and_the_State).[[239]](#cite_note-239) According to a poll in January 2007,[[240]](#cite_note-240) only 5% of the French population attended church regularly (10% attend church services regularly among the respondents who did identify themselves as Catholics). The poll showed[[241]](#cite_note-241) 51% identified as being Catholics, 31% identified as being agnostics or [atheists](/wiki/Atheism) *(another poll*[*[242]*](#cite_note-242) *sets the proportion of atheists equal to 27%)*, 10% identified as being from other religions or being without opinion, 4% identified as Muslim, 3% identified as Protestant, 1% identified as [Buddhist](/wiki/Buddhism), 1% identified as Jewish. Meanwhile, an independent estimate by the politologist Pierre Bréchon in 2009 concluded that the proportion of Catholics had fallen to 42% while the number of atheists and agnostics had risen to 50%.[[243]](#cite_note-243) According to [Eurobarometer](/wiki/Eurobarometer) poll in 2012 [Christianity](/wiki/Christianity) is the largest religion in France accounting 60% of French citizens.<ref name=EUROBAROMETER>[Template:Citation](/wiki/Template:Citation) The question asked was "Do you consider yourself to be...?" With a card showing: Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Other Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu, Atheist, and Non-believer/Agnostic. Space was given for Other (SPONTANEOUS) and DK. Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu did not reach the 1% threshold.</ref> [Catholics](/wiki/Catholics) are the largest [Christian](/wiki/Christian) group in France, accounting for 50% of French citizens,[[244]](#cite_note-244) while [Protestants](/wiki/Protestant) make up 8%, and Other Christian make up 2%. [Non believer/Agnostic](/wiki/Agnostic) account 20%, [Atheist](/wiki/Atheist) account's 13%, and [Muslim](/wiki/Muslim) 6%.[[244]](#cite_note-244) Estimates of the number of [Muslims in France](/wiki/Islam_in_France) vary widely. In 2003, the French Ministry of the Interior estimated the total number of people of Muslim background to be between 5 and 6 million (8–10%).[[245]](#cite_note-245)[[246]](#cite_note-246) According to the Pewforum, "In France, proponents of a 2004 law banning the wearing of religious symbols in schools say it protects Muslim girls from being forced to wear a headscarf, but the law also restricts those who want to wear headscarves – or any other "conspicuous" religious symbol, including large Christian crosses and Sikh turbans – as an expression of their faith"[[247]](#cite_note-247) The current [Jewish community in France](/wiki/Jews_in_France) numbers around 600,000 according to the [World Jewish Congress](/wiki/World_Jewish_Congress) and is the largest in Europe.

Since 1905 the French government has followed the principle of [*laïcité*](/wiki/Laïcité), in which it is prohibited from recognising any specific right to a religious community (except for legacy statutes like that of military chaplains and the [local law in Alsace-Moselle](/wiki/Local_law_in_Alsace-Moselle)). Instead, it merely recognises *religious organisations*, according to formal legal criteria that do not address religious doctrine. Conversely, religious organizations should refrain from intervening in policy-making.[[248]](#cite_note-248) Certain bodies of beliefs such as [Scientology](/wiki/Scientology), [Children of God](/wiki/Children_of_God_(New_Religious_Movement)), the [Unification Church](/wiki/Unification_Church), or the [Order of the Solar Temple](/wiki/Order_of_the_Solar_Temple) are considered [cults](/wiki/Cult) ("[*sectes*](/wiki/Sect#Corresponding_words_in_other_European_languages)" in French),[[249]](#cite_note-249) and therefore do not have the same status as religions in France. *Secte* is considered a pejorative term in France.[[250]](#cite_note-250)

### Health[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|220px|alt=Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris, stone building with slate dome|The](/wiki/File:P1000513_Paris_XIII_Salpetrière_reductwk.JPG) [Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital](/wiki/Pitié-Salpêtrière_Hospital), a teaching hospital in Paris, one of Europe's largest hospitals.[[251]](#cite_note-251) The [French health care system](/wiki/Health_in_France) is one of [universal health care](/wiki/Universal_health_care) largely financed by government [national health insurance](/wiki/National_health_insurance). In its 2000 assessment of world health care systems, the [World Health Organization](/wiki/World_Health_Organization) found that France provided the "close to best overall health care" in the world.[[252]](#cite_note-252) The French healthcare system was ranked first worldwide by the World Health Organization in 1997.[[253]](#cite_note-253)[[254]](#cite_note-254) In 2011, France spent 11.6% of [GDP](/wiki/GDP) on health care, or US$4,086 per capita,[[255]](#cite_note-255) a figure much higher than the average spent by countries in Europe but [less than in the US](/wiki/Health_care_compared#International_comparisons). Approximately 77% of health expenditures are covered by government funded agencies.[[256]](#cite_note-256) Care is generally free for people affected by [chronic diseases](/wiki/Chronic_disease) (*affections de longues durées*) such as cancer, AIDS or [Cystic Fibrosis](/wiki/Cystic_Fibrosis). Average life expectancy at birth is 78 years for men and 85 years for women, one of the highest of the European Union.[[257]](#cite_note-257) There are 3.22 physicians for every 1000 inhabitants in France,[[258]](#cite_note-258) and average health care spending per capita was US$4,719 in 2008.[[259]](#cite_note-259)[Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), approximately 140,000 inhabitants (0.4%) of France are living with HIV/AIDS.[[67]](#cite_note-67) Even if the [French](/wiki/Frenchmen) have the reputation of being one of the thinnest people in developed countries,<ref name = obesity>[Even the French are fighting obesity](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/03/world/europe/03iht-obese.html) – The NY Times</ref><ref name=daily>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref><ref name = Telegraph>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref><ref name = bloomberg>[Why So Few French Are Fat](http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/jul2001/nf2001073_981.htm) – Bloomberg Businessweek</ref>[[260]](#cite_note-260)[[261]](#cite_note-261)France—like other rich countries—faces an increasing and recent epidemic of [obesity](/wiki/Obesity), due mostly to the replacement of traditional healthy French cuisine by [junk food](/wiki/Junk_food) in French eating habits.[[262]](#cite_note-262)[[263]](#cite_note-263)<ref name = obesity2>[France heading for US obesity levels says study](http://www.foodnavigator.com/Science-Nutrition/France-heading-for-US-obesity-levels-says-study) – Food Navigator</ref> Nevertheless, the French obesity rate is far below that of the USA (for instance, obesity rate in France is the same that the American once was in the 1970s[[263]](#cite_note-263)), and is still the lowest of Europe,[[264]](#cite_note-264)[[265]](#cite_note-265) but it is now regarded by the authorities as one of the main public health issues[[266]](#cite_note-266) and is fiercely fought; rates of childhood obesity are slowing in France, while continuing to grow in other countries.[[267]](#cite_note-267)

### Education[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

[thumb|alt=Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire at Strasbourg, stone building with portico by a park|The](/wiki/File:Absolute_BNUS_01.JPG) [National and University Library](/wiki/Bibliothèque_nationale_et_universitaire) on the campus of the [University of Strasbourg](/wiki/University_of_Strasbourg).

In 1802, [Napoleon](/wiki/Napoleon) created the [lycée](/wiki/Lycée).[[268]](#cite_note-268) Nevertheless, it is [Jules Ferry](/wiki/Jules_Ferry) who is considered to be the father of the French modern school, which is free, secular, and compulsory until the age of 13 since 1882[[269]](#cite_note-269) (school attendance in France is now compulsory until the age of 16[[270]](#cite_note-270)).

Nowadays, the schooling system in France is centralized, and is composed of three stages, primary education, secondary education, and higher education. The [Programme for International Student Assessment](/wiki/Programme_for_International_Student_Assessment), coordinated by the [OECD](/wiki/OECD), currently ranks France's education as the 25th best in the world, being neither significantly higher nor lower than the OECD average.[[271]](#cite_note-271) Primary and secondary education are predominantly public, run by the [Ministry of National Education](/wiki/Minister_of_National_Education_(France)). In France, education is compulsory from six to sixteen years old, and the public school is secular and free. If training and remuneration of teachers, and the choice of programs, are the state spring, the management of primary and secondary schools is the responsibility of local authorities. Primary education is made in two phases. The nursery school, which welcome very young children has as a main goal their awakening, their socialisation and the development of basic tools that are the language and the number. Then, around the age of six, children are greeted by elementary school, whose primary objectives are: learning, writing, arithmetic and civics. Secondary education also takes place in two cycles. The first is offered to college and leads to the national certificate ([Template:Ill](/wiki/Template:Ill)). The second is offered in high school and results in national exams and ends (the bachelor professional, technical or general) and the Certificate of Professional Competence (CAPA in agricultural education).

[Higher education in France](/wiki/Education_in_France#Higher_education) is divided between [public universities](/wiki/Universities_in_France) and the prestigious and selective [*Grandes écoles*](/wiki/Grandes_écoles), such as [Sciences Po Paris](/wiki/Sciences_Po_Paris) for Political studies, [HEC Paris](/wiki/HEC_Paris) for Economics, [Polytechnique](/wiki/Polytechnique) and the [École nationale supérieure des mines de Paris](/wiki/École_nationale_supérieure_des_mines_de_Paris) that produces high-profile engineers, or the [École nationale d'administration](/wiki/École_nationale_d'administration) for careers in the great corps of the State. The *Grandes écoles* have been criticised for alleged [elitism](/wiki/Elitism),[[272]](#cite_note-272) nevertheless they have produced many if not most of France's high-ranking civil servants, CEOs, and politicians.

Since higher education is funded by the state, the fees are very low; the tuition varies from €150 to €700 depending on the university and the different levels of education. (*licence, master, doctorate*). One can therefore get a master's degree (in 5 years) for about €750–3,500. The tuition in public engineering schools is comparable to universities, albeit a little higher (around €700). However it can reach €7000 a year for private engineering schools, and some business schools, which are all private or partially private, charge up to €15000 a year. Health insurance for students is free until the age of 20.

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=36)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|alt=Château de Chenonceau in the Loire valley, the castle that spans the river with a round keep, and garden|](/wiki/File:Château_de_Chenonceau_-_west_view_from_Catherine_de_Medici_Gardens_1a_(4_May_2006).JPG)[Château de Chenonceau](/wiki/Château_de_Chenonceau) in the [Loire valley](/wiki/Loire_valley) France has been a center of Western cultural development for centuries. Many French artists have been among the most renowned of their time, and France is still recognized in the world for its rich cultural tradition.

The successive political regimes have always promoted artistic creation, and the creation of the [Ministry of Culture](/wiki/Minister_of_Culture_(France)) in 1959 helped preserve the cultural heritage of the country and make it available to the public. The Ministry of Culture has been very active since its creation, granting subsidies to artists, promoting French culture in the world, supporting festivals and cultural events, protecting [historical monuments](/wiki/Monument_historique). The French government also succeeded in maintaining a [cultural exception](/wiki/Cultural_exception) to defend audiovisual products made in the country.

France receives the highest number of tourists per year, largely thanks to the numerous cultural establishments and historical buildings implanted all over the territory. It counts 1,200 [museums](/wiki/List_of_museums_in_France) welcoming more than 50 million people annually.[[273]](#cite_note-273) The most important cultural sites are run by the government, for instance through the public agency [Centre des monuments nationaux](/wiki/Centre_des_monuments_nationaux), which is responsible for approximately 85 national historical monuments.

The 43,180 buildings protected as historical monuments include mainly residences (many [castles](/wiki/List_of_castles_in_France), or [*châteaux*](/wiki/Château) in French) and religious buildings ([cathedrals](/wiki/List_of_cathedrals_in_France), [basilicas](/wiki/List_of_basilicas_in_France), churches, etc.), but also statutes, memorials and [gardens](/wiki/Gardens_of_France). The [UNESCO](/wiki/UNESCO) inscribed 41 sites in [France on the World Heritage List](/wiki/Table_of_World_Heritage_Sites_by_country).[[274]](#cite_note-274)

### Art[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=37)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|alt=painting by Claude Monet of woman with parasol facing left in field from the Musée d'Orsay|](/wiki/File:Claude_Monet_023.jpg)[Claude Monet](/wiki/Claude_Monet) founded the [Impressionist](/wiki/Impressionist) movement (*Femme avec un parasol*, 1886, [Musée d'Orsay](/wiki/Musée_d'Orsay)).

The origins of French art were very much influenced by [Flemish art](/wiki/Flemish_art) and by [Italian art](/wiki/Italian_art) at the time of the Renaissance. [Jean Fouquet](/wiki/Jean_Fouquet), the most famous medieval French painter, is said to have been the first to travel to Italy and experience the Early Renaissance at first hand. The Renaissance painting [School of Fontainebleau](/wiki/School_of_Fontainebleau) was directly inspired by Italian painters such as [Primaticcio](/wiki/Primaticcio) and [Rosso Fiorentino](/wiki/Rosso_Fiorentino), who both worked in France. Two of the most famous French artists of the time of [Baroque era](/wiki/Baroque_era), [Nicolas Poussin](/wiki/Nicolas_Poussin) and [Claude Lorrain](/wiki/Claude_Lorrain), lived in Italy.

The 17th century was the period when French painting became prominent and individualized itself through classicism. Louis XIV's prime minister [Jean-Baptiste Colbert](/wiki/Jean-Baptiste_Colbert) founded in 1648 the [Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture](/wiki/Royal_Academy_of_Painting_and_Sculpture) to protect these artists, and in 1666 he created the still-active [French Academy in Rome](/wiki/French_Academy_in_Rome) to have direct relations with Italian artists.

[thumb|left|upright|alt=The Thinker bronze statue from 1902 from the Musée Rodin, Paris|](/wiki/File:LE_PENSEUR_-_Museo_Rodin-_PARIS.jpg)[*Le Penseur*](/wiki/The_Thinker) by [Auguste Rodin](/wiki/Auguste_Rodin) (1902), [Musée Rodin](/wiki/Musée_Rodin), Paris.

French artists developed the [rococo](/wiki/Rococo) style in the 18th century, as a more intimate imitation of old baroque style, the works of the court-endorsed artists [Antoine Watteau](/wiki/Antoine_Watteau), [François Boucher](/wiki/François_Boucher) and [Jean-Honoré Fragonard](/wiki/Jean-Honoré_Fragonard) being the most representative in the country. The French Revolution brought great changes, as [Napoleon](/wiki/Napoleon) favoured artists of [neoclassic style](/wiki/Neoclassicism) such as [Jacques-Louis David](/wiki/Jacques-Louis_David) and the highly influential [Académie des Beaux-Arts](/wiki/Académie_des_Beaux-Arts) defined the style known as [Academism](/wiki/Academism). At this time France had become a centre of artistic creation, the first half of the 19th century being dominated by two successive movements, at first [Romanticism](/wiki/Romanticism) with [Théodore Géricault](/wiki/Théodore_Géricault) and [Eugène Delacroix](/wiki/Eugène_Delacroix), and [Realism](/wiki/Realism_(arts)) with [Camille Corot](/wiki/Camille_Corot), [Gustave Courbet](/wiki/Gustave_Courbet) and [Jean-François Millet](/wiki/Jean-François_Millet), a style that eventually evolved into [Naturalism](/wiki/Naturalism_(arts)).

In the second part of the 19th century, France's influence over painting became even more important, with the development of new styles of painting such as [Impressionism](/wiki/Impressionism) and [Symbolism](/wiki/Symbolism_(arts)). The most famous impressionist painters of the period were [Camille Pissarro](/wiki/Camille_Pissarro), [Édouard Manet](/wiki/Édouard_Manet), [Edgar Degas](/wiki/Edgar_Degas), Claude Monet and [Auguste Renoir](/wiki/Auguste_Renoir).[[275]](#cite_note-275) The second generation of impressionist-style painters, [Paul Cézanne](/wiki/Paul_Cézanne), [Paul Gauguin](/wiki/Paul_Gauguin), [Toulouse-Lautrec](/wiki/Toulouse-Lautrec) and [Georges Seurat](/wiki/Georges_Seurat), were also at the avant-garde of artistic evolutions,[[276]](#cite_note-276) as well as the [fauvist artists](/wiki/Fauvism) [Henri Matisse](/wiki/Henri_Matisse), [André Derain](/wiki/André_Derain) and [Maurice de Vlaminck](/wiki/Maurice_de_Vlaminck).[[277]](#cite_note-277)[[278]](#cite_note-278) At the beginning of the 20th century, Cubism was developed by [Georges Braque](/wiki/Georges_Braque) and the Spanish painter [Pablo Picasso](/wiki/Pablo_Picasso), living in Paris. Other foreign artists also settled and worked in or near Paris, such as [Vincent van Gogh](/wiki/Vincent_van_Gogh), [Marc Chagall](/wiki/Marc_Chagall), [Amedeo Modigliani](/wiki/Amedeo_Modigliani) and [Wassily Kandinsky](/wiki/Wassily_Kandinsky).

Many museums in France are entirely or partly devoted to sculptures and painting works. A huge collection of old masterpieces created before or during the 18th century are displayed in the state-owned [Musée du Louvre](/wiki/Musée_du_Louvre), such as [Mona Lisa](/wiki/Mona_Lisa), also known as La Joconde. While the [Louvre Palace](/wiki/Louvre_Palace) has been for a long time a museum, the Musée d'Orsay was inaugurated in 1986 in the old railway station [Gare d'Orsay](/wiki/Gare_d'Orsay), in a major reorganization of national art collections, to gather French paintings from the second part of the 19th century (mainly Impressionism and Fauvism movements).[[279]](#cite_note-279)[[280]](#cite_note-280) Modern works are presented in the [Musée National d'Art Moderne](/wiki/Musée_National_d'Art_Moderne), which moved in 1976 to the [Centre Georges Pompidou](/wiki/Centre_Georges_Pompidou). These three state-owned museums welcome close to 17 million people a year.<ref name=sites>[Template:Fr icon](/wiki/Template:Fr_icon) Ministry of Tourism, [Sites touristiques en France](http://www.tourisme.gouv.fr/stat_etudes/memento/2009/sites.pdf) page 2 "Palmarès des 30 premiers sites culturels (entrées comptabilisées)" [Ranking of 30 most visited cultural sites in France]</ref> Other national museums hosting paintings include the [Grand Palais](/wiki/Grand_Palais) (1.3 million visitors in 2008), but there are also many museums owned by cities, the most visited being the [Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris](/wiki/Musée_d'Art_Moderne_de_la_Ville_de_Paris) (0.8 million entries in 2008), which hosts contemporary works.[[281]](#cite_note-281) Outside Paris, all the large cities have a Museum of Fine Arts with a section dedicated to European and French painting. Some of the finest collections are in [Lyon](/wiki/Musée_des_Beaux-Arts_de_Lyon), [Lille](/wiki/Palais_des_Beaux-Arts_de_Lille), [Rouen](/wiki/Musée_des_Beaux-Arts_de_Rouen), [Dijon](/wiki/Musée_des_Beaux-Arts_de_Dijon), [Rennes](/wiki/Musée_des_Beaux-Arts_de_Rennes) and [Grenoble](/wiki/Museum_of_Grenoble).

### Architecture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=38)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|alt=Sainte Chapelle interior showing painted stonework vaulting and stained glass|](/wiki/File:Sainte_chapelle_-_Upper_level.jpg)[Saint Louis'](/wiki/Louis_IX_of_France) [Sainte Chapelle](/wiki/Sainte_Chapelle) represents the French impact on religious architecture. [thumb|alt=Opéra Garnier interior showing chandeliers and gilded decoration|](/wiki/File:Palais_Garnier's_grand_salon,_12_February_2008.jpg)[Opéra Garnier](/wiki/Opéra_Garnier), Paris, a symbol of the French [Second Empire](/wiki/Second_Empire_(architecture)) style

During the Middle Ages, many fortified [castles](/wiki/Castle) were built by feudal nobles to mark their powers. Some French castles that survived are [Chinon](/wiki/Chinon_(castle)), [Château d'Angers](/wiki/Château_d'Angers), the massive [Château de Vincennes](/wiki/Château_de_Vincennes) and the so-called [Cathar castles](/wiki/Cathar_castles). During this era, France had been using [Romanesque architecture](/wiki/Romanesque_architecture) like most of Western Europe. Some of the greatest examples of Romanesque churches in France are the [Saint Sernin Basilica](/wiki/Basilique_de_Saint-Sernin,_Toulouse) in [Toulouse](/wiki/Toulouse,_France), the largest romanesque church in Europe,[[282]](#cite_note-282) and the remains of the [Cluniac Abbey](/wiki/Cluny_Abbey).

The [Gothic architecture](/wiki/Gothic_architecture), originally named *Opus Francigenum* meaning "French work",[[283]](#cite_note-283) was born in [Île-de-France](/wiki/Île-de-France) and was the first French style of architecture to be copied in all Europe.[[284]](#cite_note-284) Northern France is the home of some of the most important Gothic [cathedrals](/wiki/Cathedral) and basilicas, the first of these being the [Saint Denis Basilica](/wiki/Saint_Denis_Basilica) (used as the royal necropolis); other important French Gothic cathedrals are [Notre-Dame de Chartres](/wiki/Cathedral_of_Chartres) and [Notre-Dame d'Amiens](/wiki/Amiens_Cathedral). The kings were crowned in another important Gothic church: [Notre-Dame de Reims](/wiki/Notre-Dame_de_Reims).[[285]](#cite_note-285) Aside from churches, Gothic Architecture had been used for many religious palaces, the most important one being the [Palais des Papes](/wiki/Palais_des_Papes) in Avignon.

The final victory in the Hundred Years' War marked an important stage in the evolution of French architecture. It was the time of the [French Renaissance](/wiki/French_Renaissance) and several artists from Italy were invited to the French court; many residential palaces were built in the [Loire Valley](/wiki/Loire_Valley). Such residential castles were the [Château de Chambord](/wiki/Château_de_Chambord), the [Château de Chenonceau](/wiki/Château_de_Chenonceau), or the [Château d'Amboise](/wiki/Château_d'Amboise).

Following the renaissance and the end of the Middle Ages, [Baroque architecture](/wiki/French_Baroque_architecture) replaced the traditional Gothic style. However, in France, baroque architecture found a greater success in the secular domain than in a religious one.[[286]](#cite_note-286) In the secular domain, the [Palace of Versailles](/wiki/Palace_of_Versailles) has many baroque features. [Jules Hardouin Mansart](/wiki/Jules_Hardouin_Mansart), who designed the extensions to Versailles, was one of the most influential French architect of the baroque era; he is famous for his dome at [Les Invalides](/wiki/Les_Invalides).[[287]](#cite_note-287) Some of the most impressive provincial baroque architecture is found in places that were not yet French such as the [Place Stanislas](/wiki/Place_Stanislas) in [Nancy](/wiki/Nancy,_France). On the military architectural side, [Vauban](/wiki/Vauban) designed some of the most efficient fortresses in Europe and became an influential military architect; as a result, imitations of his works can be found all over Europe, the Americas, Russia and Turkey.[[288]](#cite_note-288)[[289]](#cite_note-289) [thumb|upright|alt=Tour Eiffel at sunrise from the trocadero|The world's most visited paid monument,](/wiki/File:Tour_eiffel_at_sunrise_from_the_trocadero.jpg)[[290]](#cite_note-290) the [Eiffel Tower](/wiki/Eiffel_Tower) is an icon of both Paris and France.

After the Revolution, the [Republicans](/wiki/Republicanism) favoured [Neoclassicism](/wiki/Neoclassicism) although neoclassicism was introduced in France prior to the revolution with such building as the [Parisian Pantheon](/wiki/Panthéon,_Paris) or the [Capitole de Toulouse](/wiki/Capitole_de_Toulouse). Built during the first French Empire, the [Arc de Triomphe](/wiki/Arc_de_Triomphe) and [Sainte Marie-Madeleine](/wiki/Église_de_la_Madeleine) represent the best example of [Empire style](/wiki/Empire_style) architecture.[[291]](#cite_note-291) Under [Napoleon III](/wiki/Napoleon_III), a new wave of urbanism and architecture was given birth; extravagant buildings such as the neo-baroque [Palais Garnier](/wiki/Palais_Garnier) were built. The urban planning of the time was very organised and rigorous; for example, [Haussmann's renovation of Paris](/wiki/Haussmann's_renovation_of_Paris). The architecture associated to this era is named [Second Empire](/wiki/Second_Empire_(architecture)) in English, the term being taken from the [Second French Empire](/wiki/Second_French_Empire). At this time there was a strong Gothic resurgence across Europe and in France; the associated architect was [Eugène Viollet-le-Duc](/wiki/Eugène_Viollet-le-Duc). In the late 19th century, [Gustave Eiffel](/wiki/Gustave_Eiffel) designed many bridges, such as [Garabit viaduct](/wiki/Garabit_viaduct), and remains one of the most influential bridge designers of his time, although he is best remembered for the iconic [Eiffel Tower](/wiki/Eiffel_Tower).

In the 20th century, French-Swiss architect [Le Corbusier](/wiki/Le_Corbusier) designed several buildings in France. More recently, French architects have combined both modern and old architectural styles. The [Louvre Pyramid](/wiki/Louvre_Pyramid) is an example of modern architecture added to an older building. The most difficult buildings to integrate within French cities are skyscrapers, as they are visible from afar. For instance, in Paris, since 1977, new buildings had to be under 37 meters, or 121 feet.[[292]](#cite_note-292) France's largest financial district is [La Defense](/wiki/La_Defense), where a significant number of skyscrapers are located.[[293]](#cite_note-293) Other massive buildings that are a challenge to integrate into their environment are large bridges; an example of the way this has been done is the [Millau Viaduct](/wiki/Millau_Viaduct). Some famous modern French architects include [Jean Nouvel](/wiki/Jean_Nouvel), [Dominique Perrault](/wiki/Dominique_Perrault), [Christian de Portzamparc](/wiki/Christian_de_Portzamparc) or [Paul Andreu](/wiki/Paul_Andreu).

### Literature[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=39)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

The earliest French literature dates from the [Middle Ages](/wiki/Middle_Age), when what is now known as modern France did not have a single, uniform language. There were several languages and dialects and writers used their own spelling and grammar. Some authors of French mediaeval texts are unknown, such as [*Tristan and Iseult*](/wiki/Tristan_and_Iseult) and [*Lancelot-Grail*](/wiki/Lancelot-Grail). Other authors are known, for example [Chrétien de Troyes](/wiki/Chrétien_de_Troyes) and [Duke William IX of Aquitaine](/wiki/William_IX_of_Aquitaine), who wrote in [Occitan](/wiki/Occitan).

Much mediaeval French poetry and literature were inspired by the legends of the [Matter of France](/wiki/Matter_of_France), such as [*The Song of Roland*](/wiki/The_Song_of_Roland) and the various [chansons de geste](/wiki/Chansons_de_geste). The *Roman de Renart*, written in 1175 by Perrout de Saint Cloude, tells the story of the mediaeval character [Reynard](/wiki/Reynard) ('the Fox') and is another example of early French writing.

An important 16th-century writer was [François Rabelais](/wiki/François_Rabelais), whose novel [*Gargantua and Pantagruel*](/wiki/Gargantua_and_Pantagruel) has remained famous and appreciated until now. [Michel de Montaigne](/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne) was the other major figure of the French literature during that century. His most famous work, [*Essais*](/wiki/Essays_(Montaigne)), created the literary genre of the essay.[[294]](#cite_note-294) [French poetry](/wiki/French_poetry) during that century was embodied by [Pierre de Ronsard](/wiki/Pierre_de_Ronsard) and [Joachim du Bellay](/wiki/Joachim_du_Bellay). Both writers founded the [La Pléiade](/wiki/La_Pléiade) literary movement.

During the 17th century, [Madame de La Fayette](/wiki/Madame_de_La_Fayette) published anonymously [*La Princesse de Clèves*](/wiki/La_Princesse_de_Clèves), a novel that is considered to be one of the very first [psychological novels](/wiki/Psychological_novel) of all times.[[295]](#cite_note-295) [Jean de La Fontaine](/wiki/Jean_de_La_Fontaine) is one of the most famous [fabulist](/wiki/Fabulist) of that time, as he wrote hundreds of fables, some being far more famous than others, such as [*The Ant and the Grasshopper*](/wiki/The_Ant_and_the_Grasshopper). Generations of French pupils had to learn his fables, that were seen as helping teaching [wisdom](/wiki/Wisdom) and [common sense](/wiki/Common_sense) to the young people. Some of his verses have entered the popular language to become proverbs.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

[thumb|alt=see description|French literary figures. Clockwise from top left:](/wiki/File:French_literary_figures.jpg) [Molière](/wiki/Molière) is the most played author in the [Comédie-Française](/wiki/Comédie-Française);[[296]](#cite_note-296) [Victor Hugo](/wiki/Victor_Hugo) is one of the most important French novelists and poets, and is sometimes seen as the greatest French writer of all time.<ref name = victor>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> 19th-century poet, writer, and translator [Charles Baudelaire](/wiki/Charles_Baudelaire); 20th-century philosopher and novelist [Jean-Paul Sartre](/wiki/Jean-Paul_Sartre).

[Jean Racine](/wiki/Jean_Racine), whose incredible mastery of the [alexandrine](/wiki/Alexandrine) and of the French language has been praised for centuries, created plays such as [*Phèdre*](/wiki/Phèdre) or [*Britannicus*](/wiki/Britannicus). He is, along with [Pierre Corneille](/wiki/Pierre_Corneille) ([*Le Cid*](/wiki/Le_Cid)) and Molière, considered as one of the three great dramatists of the France's [golden age](/wiki/Louis_XIV_of_France#Patronage_o_the_arts). Molière, who is deemed to be one of the greatest masters of comedy of the [Western literature](/wiki/Western_literature),[[297]](#cite_note-297) wrote [dozens of plays](/wiki/Molière#List_of_major_works), including [*Le Misanthrope*](/wiki/Le_Misanthrope), [*L'Avare*](/wiki/L'Avare), [*Le Malade imaginaire*](/wiki/Le_Malade_imaginaire), and [*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*](/wiki/Le_Bourgeois_Gentilhomme). His plays have been so popular around the world that French language is sometimes dubbed as "the language of Molière" (*la langue de Molière*),[[298]](#cite_note-298) just like English is considered as "the language of [Shakespeare](/wiki/Shakespeare)".

French literature and poetry flourished even more in the 18th and 19th centuries. [Denis Diderot's](/wiki/Denis_Diderot) best-known works are [*Jacques the Fatalist*](/wiki/Jacques_the_Fatalist) and [*Rameau's Nephew*](/wiki/Rameau's_Nephew). He is however best known for being the main redactor of the [*Encyclopédie*](/wiki/Encyclopédie), whose aim was to sum up all the knowledge of his century (in fields such as arts, sciences, languages, philosophy) and to present them to the people, in order to fight ignorance and [obscurantism](/wiki/Obscurantism). During that same century, [Charles Perrault](/wiki/Charles_Perrault) was a prolific writer of famous children's fairy tales including [*Puss in Boots*](/wiki/Puss_in_Boots), [*Cinderella*](/wiki/Cinderella), [*Sleeping Beauty*](/wiki/Sleeping_Beauty) and [*Bluebeard*](/wiki/Bluebeard). At the start of the 19th century, [symbolist poetry](/wiki/Symbolist_poetry) was an important movement in French literature, with poets such as Charles Baudelaire, [Paul Verlaine](/wiki/Paul_Verlaine) and [Stéphane Mallarmé](/wiki/Stéphane_Mallarmé).[[299]](#cite_note-299) The 19th century saw the writings of many renowned French authors. Victor Hugo is sometimes seen as "the greatest French writer of all times"[[300]](#cite_note-300) for excelling in all [literary genres](/wiki/Literary_genre). The preface of his play [*Cromwell*](/wiki/Cromwell_(play)) is considered to be the manifesto of the [Romantic movement](/wiki/Romanticism). [*Les Contemplations*](/wiki/Les_Contemplations) and [*La Légende des siècles*](/wiki/La_Légende_des_siècles) are considered as "poetic masterpieces",<ref name = hugo>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> Hugo's verse having been compared to that of Shakespeare, [Dante](/wiki/Dante) and [Homer](/wiki/Homer).[[301]](#cite_note-301) His novel [*Les Misérables*](/wiki/Les_Misérables) is widely seen as one of the greatest novel ever written[[302]](#cite_note-302) and [*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*](/wiki/The_Hunchback_of_Notre-Dame) has remained immensely popular.

Other major authors of that century include [Alexandre Dumas](/wiki/Alexandre_Dumas) ([*The Three Musketeers*](/wiki/The_Three_Musketeers) and [*The Count of Monte-Cristo*](/wiki/The_Count_of_Monte-Cristo)), [Jules Verne](/wiki/Jules_Verne) ([*Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*](/wiki/Twenty_Thousand_Leagues_Under_the_Sea)), [Émile Zola](/wiki/Émile_Zola) ([*Les Rougon-Macquart*](/wiki/Les_Rougon-Macquart)), [Honoré de Balzac](/wiki/Honoré_de_Balzac) ([*La Comédie humaine*](/wiki/La_Comédie_humaine)), [Guy de Maupassant](/wiki/Guy_de_Maupassant), [Théophile Gautier](/wiki/Théophile_Gautier) and [Stendhal](/wiki/Stendhal) ([*The Red and the Black*](/wiki/The_Red_and_the_Black), [*The Charterhouse of Parma*](/wiki/The_Charterhouse_of_Parma)), whose works are among the most well known in France and the world.

The [Prix Goncourt](/wiki/Prix_Goncourt) is a French literary prize first awarded in 1903.[[303]](#cite_note-303) Important writers of the 20th century include [Marcel Proust](/wiki/Marcel_Proust), [Louis-Ferdinand Céline](/wiki/Louis-Ferdinand_Céline), [Albert Camus](/wiki/Albert_Camus), and [Jean-Paul Sartre](/wiki/Jean-Paul_Sartre). [Antoine de Saint Exupéry](/wiki/Antoine_de_Saint_Exupéry) wrote [*Little Prince*](/wiki/The_Little_Prince), which has remained popular for decades with children and adults around the world.[[304]](#cite_note-304) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), French authors had more [Literature Nobel Prizes](/wiki/Nobel_Prize_in_Literature) than [those of any other nation](/wiki/List_of_Nobel_laureates_in_Literature#Laureates_per_country).[[305]](#cite_note-305) The first Nobel Prize in Literature was a French author, while France's latest Nobel prize in literature is [Patrick Modiano](/wiki/Patrick_Modiano), who was awarded the prize in 2014.[[305]](#cite_note-305) Jean-Paul Sartre was also the first nominee in the committee's history to refuse the prize in 1964.[[305]](#cite_note-305)

### Philosophy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=40)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Medieval philosophy was dominated by [Scholasticism](/wiki/Scholasticism) until the emergence of [Humanism](/wiki/Humanism_in_France) in the Renaissance. [Modern philosophy](/wiki/Modern_philosophy) began in France in the 17th century with the philosophy of [René Descartes](/wiki/René_Descartes), [Blaise Pascal](/wiki/Blaise_Pascal), and [Nicolas Malebranche](/wiki/Nicolas_Malebranche). Descartes revitalised [Western philosophy](/wiki/Western_philosophy), which had been declined after the Greek and Roman eras.[[306]](#cite_note-306) His [*Meditations on First Philosophy*](/wiki/Meditations_on_First_Philosophy) changed the primary object of philosophical thought and raised some of the most fundamental problems for foreigners such as [Spinoza](/wiki/Spinoza), [Leibniz](/wiki/Gottfried_Wilhelm_Leibniz), [Hume](/wiki/David_Hume), [Berkeley](/wiki/George_Berkeley), and [Kant](/wiki/Immanuel_Kant). [thumb|upright|alt=Frans Hals painting of René Descartes facing right in black coat and white collar|](/wiki/File:Frans_Hals_-_Portret_van_René_Descartes.jpg)[René Descartes](/wiki/René_Descartes), founder of modern philosophy.

During the 18th century, French philosophers produced one of the most important works of the [Age of Enlightenment](/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment). In [*The Spirit of the Laws*](/wiki/The_Spirit_of_the_Laws), [Baron de Montesquieu](/wiki/Baron_de_Montesquieu) theorized the principle of [separation of powers](/wiki/Separation_of_powers), which has been implemented in all [liberal democracies](/wiki/Liberal_democracy) since [it was first applied in the United States](/wiki/Separation_of_powers_under_the_United_States_Constitution). In [*The Social Contract*](/wiki/Du_contrat_social_ou_Principes_du_droit_politique), [Jean-Jacques Rousseau](/wiki/Jean-Jacques_Rousseau) openly criticized the European [divine right monarchies](/wiki/Divine_right_monarchy) and strongly affirmed the principle of the [sovereignty of the people](/wiki/Sovereignty_of_the_people). [Voltaire](/wiki/Voltaire) came to embody the Enlightenment with his defence of civil liberties, such as the right to a free trial and freedom of religion.

19th-century French thought was targeted at responding to the social malaise following the French Revolution. Rationalist philosophers such as [Victor Cousin](/wiki/Victor_Cousin) and [Auguste Comte](/wiki/Auguste_Comte), who called for a new social doctrine, were opposed by reactionary thinkers such as [Joseph de Maistre](/wiki/Joseph_de_Maistre), [Louis de Bonald](/wiki/Louis_Gabriel_Ambroise_de_Bonald) and [Lamennais](/wiki/Hugues_Felicité_Robert_de_Lamennais), who blamed the rationalist rejection of traditional order. De Maistre is considered, together with the Englishman [Edmund Burke](/wiki/Edmund_Burke), one of the founders of European conservatism, while Comte is regarded as the founder of [positivism](/wiki/Positivism) and [sociology](/wiki/Sociology).

In the early 20th century, French [spiritualist](/wiki/Spiritualism_(philosophy)) thinkers such as [Maine de Biran](/wiki/Maine_de_Biran), [Henri Bergson](/wiki/Henri_Bergson) and [Louis Lavelle](/wiki/Louis_Lavelle) influenced Anglo-Saxon thought, including the Americans [Charles Sanders Peirce](/wiki/Charles_Sanders_Peirce) and [William James](/wiki/William_James), and the Englishman [Alfred North Whitehead](/wiki/Alfred_North_Whitehead). In the late 20th century, partly influenced by German [phenomenology](/wiki/Phenomenology_(philosophy)) and [existentialism](/wiki/Existentialism), [postmodern philosophy](/wiki/Postmodern_philosophy) began in France, with notable [post-structuralist](/wiki/Post-structuralism) thinkers including [Jean-François Lyotard](/wiki/Jean-François_Lyotard), [Jean Baudrillard](/wiki/Jean_Baudrillard), [Jacques Derrida](/wiki/Jacques_Derrida), [Jacques Lacan](/wiki/Jacques_Lacan), [Michel Foucault](/wiki/Michel_Foucault) and [Gilles Deleuze](/wiki/Gilles_Deleuze).

### Music[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=41)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|alt=head shot of Serge Gainsbourg |](/wiki/File:Gainsbourgb.jpg)[Serge Gainsbourg](/wiki/Serge_Gainsbourg), one of the world's most influential popular musicians.[[307]](#cite_note-307) France has a long and varied musical history. It experienced a golden age in the 17th century thanks to Louis XIV, who employed a number of talented musicians and composers in the royal court. The most renowned composers of this period include [Marc-Antoine Charpentier](/wiki/Marc-Antoine_Charpentier), [François Couperin](/wiki/François_Couperin), [Michel-Richard Delalande](/wiki/Michel-Richard_Delalande), [Jean-Baptiste Lully](/wiki/Jean-Baptiste_Lully) and [Marin Marais](/wiki/Marin_Marais), all of them composers at the court. After the death of the "Roi Soleil", French musical creation lost dynamism, but in the next century the music of [Jean-Philippe Rameau](/wiki/Jean-Philippe_Rameau) reached some prestige, and today he is still one of the most renowned French composers. Rameau became the dominant composer of [French opera](/wiki/French_opera) and the leading French composer for the harpsichord.[[308]](#cite_note-308) French composers played an important role during the music of the 19th and early 20th century, which is considered to be the [Romantic music](/wiki/Romantic_music) era. Romantic music emphasized a surrender to nature, a fascination with the past and the supernatural, the exploration of unusual, strange and surprising sounds, and a focus on national identity. This period was also a golden age for operas. French composers from the Romantic era included: [Hector Berlioz](/wiki/Hector_Berlioz) (best known for his [*Symphonie fantastique*](/wiki/Symphonie_fantastique)), [Georges Bizet](/wiki/Georges_Bizet) (best known for [*Carmen*](/wiki/Carmen), which has become one of the most popular and frequently performed operas), [Gabriel Fauré](/wiki/Gabriel_Fauré) (best known for his [*Pavane*](/wiki/Pavane_(Fauré)), [*Requiem*](/wiki/Requiem_(Fauré)), and [*nocturnes*](/wiki/Fauré_Nocturnes)), [Charles Gounod](/wiki/Charles_Gounod) (best known for his [*Ave Maria*](/wiki/Ave_Maria_(Bach/Gounod)) and his [opera](/wiki/Opera) [*Faust*](/wiki/Faust_(opera))), [Jacques Offenbach](/wiki/Jacques_Offenbach) (best known for his 100 [operettas](/wiki/Operetta) of the 1850s–1870s and his uncompleted opera [*The Tales of Hoffmann*](/wiki/The_Tales_of_Hoffmann)), [Édouard Lalo](/wiki/Édouard_Lalo) (best known for his [*Symphonie espagnole*](/wiki/Symphonie_espagnole) for violin and [orchestra](/wiki/Orchestra) and his [Cello Concerto in D minor](/wiki/Cello_Concerto_(Lalo))), [Jules Massenet](/wiki/Jules_Massenet) (best known for his operas, of which he wrote more than thirty, the most frequently staged are [*Manon*](/wiki/Manon) (1884) and [*Werther*](/wiki/Werther) (1892)) and [Camille Saint-Saëns](/wiki/Camille_Saint-Saëns) (he has many frequently-performed works, including [*The Carnival of the Animals*](/wiki/The_Carnival_of_the_Animals), [*Danse macabre*](/wiki/Danse_macabre_(Saint-Saëns)), [*Samson and Delilah*](/wiki/Samson_and_Delilah_(opera)) (Opera), [*Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso*](/wiki/Introduction_and_Rondo_Capriccioso), and his [Symphony No. 3 (*Organ Symphony*)](/wiki/Symphony_No._3_(Saint-Saëns))).

Later came precursors of modern classical music. [Érik Satie](/wiki/Érik_Satie) was a key member of the early 20th century Parisian [avant-garde](/wiki/Avant-garde), best known for his [*Gymnopédies*](/wiki/Gymnopédies). [Francis Poulenc's](/wiki/Francis_Poulenc) best known works are his piano suite [*Trois mouvements perpétuels*](/wiki/Trois_mouvements_perpétuels) (1919), the ballet [*Les biches*](/wiki/Les_biches) (1923), the [*Concert champêtre*](/wiki/Concert_champêtre) (1928) for [harpsichord](/wiki/Harpsichord) and orchestra, the opera [*Dialogues des Carmélites*](/wiki/Dialogues_des_Carmélites) (1957), and the [*Gloria*](/wiki/Gloria_(Poulenc)) (1959) for [soprano](/wiki/Soprano), choir and orchestra. [Maurice Ravel](/wiki/Maurice_Ravel) and [Claude Debussy](/wiki/Claude_Debussy) are the most prominent figures associated with [Impressionist music](/wiki/Impressionist_music). Debussy was among the most influential composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and his use of non-traditional scales and [chromaticism](/wiki/Chromaticism) influenced many composers who followed.[[309]](#cite_note-309) Debussy's music is noted for its sensory content and frequent usage of [atonality](/wiki/Atonality). The two composers invented new musical forms[[310]](#cite_note-310)[[311]](#cite_note-311)[[312]](#cite_note-312)[[313]](#cite_note-313) and new sounds. Ravel's piano compositions, such as [*Jeux d'eau*](/wiki/Jeux_d'eau_(Ravel)), [*Miroirs*](/wiki/Miroirs), [*Le tombeau de Couperin*](/wiki/Le_tombeau_de_Couperin) and [*Gaspard de la nuit*](/wiki/Gaspard_de_la_nuit), demand considerable virtuosity. His mastery of orchestration is evident in the [*Rapsodie espagnole*](/wiki/Rapsodie_espagnole), [*Daphnis et Chloé*](/wiki/Daphnis_et_Chloé), his arrangement of [Modest Mussorgsky's](/wiki/Modest_Mussorgsky) [*Pictures at an Exhibition*](/wiki/Pictures_at_an_Exhibition) and his orchestral work [*Boléro*](/wiki/Boléro) (1928).

More recently, at the middle of the 20th century, [Maurice Ohana](/wiki/Maurice_Ohana), [Pierre Schaeffer](/wiki/Pierre_Schaeffer) and [Pierre Boulez](/wiki/Pierre_Boulez) contributed to the evolutions of [contemporary classical music](/wiki/Contemporary_classical_music).[[314]](#cite_note-314) [thumb|alt=Daft Punk at O2 Wireless Festival, helmeted musicians at keyboard|](/wiki/File:DaftAlive.jpeg)[Daft Punk](/wiki/Daft_Punk), pioneers of the [French house](/wiki/French_house). French music then followed the rapid emergence of pop and rock music at the middle of the 20th century. Although English-speaking creations achieved popularity in the country, [French pop music](/wiki/French_popular_music), known as [*chanson française*](/wiki/Chanson_française), has also remained very popular. Among the most important French artists of the century are [Édith Piaf](/wiki/Édith_Piaf), [Georges Brassens](/wiki/Georges_Brassens), [Léo Ferré](/wiki/Léo_Ferré), [Charles Aznavour](/wiki/Charles_Aznavour) and [Serge Gainsbourg](/wiki/Serge_Gainsbourg). Although there are very few rock bands in France compared to English-speaking countries,[[315]](#cite_note-315) bands such as [Noir Désir](/wiki/Noir_Désir), [Mano Negra](/wiki/Mano_Negra), [Niagara](/wiki/Niagara_(band)), [Les Rita Mitsouko](/wiki/Les_Rita_Mitsouko) and more recently [Superbus](/wiki/Superbus_(band)), [Phoenix](/wiki/Phoenix_(band)) and [Gojira](/wiki/Gojira_(band))<ref name=frmusic>France Diplomatie, [French music has the whole planet singing](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france_159/culture-and-media_6819/culture_6874/music_5335/french-music-has-the-whole-planet-singing_13031.html), June 2009</ref> have reached worldwide popularity.

Other French artists with international careers have been popular in several countries, for example female singers [Dalida](/wiki/Dalida), [Mireille Mathieu](/wiki/Mireille_Mathieu), [Mylène Farmer](/wiki/Mylène_Farmer)[[316]](#cite_note-316) and [Nolwenn Leroy](/wiki/Nolwenn_Leroy),[[317]](#cite_note-317) electronic music pioneers [Jean-Michel Jarre](/wiki/Jean-Michel_Jarre), [Laurent Garnier](/wiki/Laurent_Garnier) and [Bob Sinclar](/wiki/Bob_Sinclar), and later [Martin Solveig](/wiki/Martin_Solveig) and [David Guetta](/wiki/David_Guetta). In the 1990s and 2000s (decade), electronic duos [Daft Punk](/wiki/Daft_Punk), [Justice](/wiki/Justice_(French_band)) and [Air](/wiki/Air_(French_band)) also reached worldwide popularity and contributed to the reputation of modern electronic music in the world.[[316]](#cite_note-316)[[318]](#cite_note-318)[[319]](#cite_note-319) Among current musical events and institutions in France, many are dedicated to classical music and operas. The most prestigious institutions are the state-owned [Paris National Opera](/wiki/Paris_National_Opera) (with its two sites [Palais Garnier](/wiki/Palais_Garnier) and [Opéra Bastille](/wiki/Opéra_Bastille)), the [Opéra National de Lyon](/wiki/Opéra_National_de_Lyon), the [Théâtre du Châtelet](/wiki/Théâtre_du_Châtelet) in Paris, the [Théâtre du Capitole](/wiki/Théâtre_du_Capitole) in [Toulouse](/wiki/Toulouse) and the [Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux](/wiki/Grand_Théâtre_de_Bordeaux). As for music festivals, there are several events organized, the most popular being the [Eurockéennes](/wiki/Eurockéennes) and [Rock en Seine](/wiki/Rock_en_Seine). The [Fête de la Musique](/wiki/Fête_de_la_Musique), imitated by many foreign cities, was first launched by the French government in 1982.[[320]](#cite_note-320)[[321]](#cite_note-321) Major music halls and venues in France include [Le Zénith](/wiki/Le_Zénith) sites present in many cities and other places in Paris ([Paris Olympia](/wiki/Paris_Olympia), [Théâtre Mogador](/wiki/Théâtre_Mogador), [Élysée Montmartre](/wiki/Élysée_Montmartre), etc.).

### Cinema[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=42)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)[thumb|alt=Palme d'Or award in presentation case|A](/wiki/File:Palmed'or.jpg) [*Palme d'Or*](/wiki/Palme_d'Or) from the [Cannes Film Festival](/wiki/Cannes_Film_Festival), the world's most prestigious and publicized film festival.[[322]](#cite_note-322)[[323]](#cite_note-323)[[324]](#cite_note-324) France has historical and strong links with [cinema](/wiki/Filmmaking), with two [Frenchmen](/wiki/Frenchmen), Auguste and Louis Lumière (known as the [Lumière Brothers](/wiki/Auguste_and_Louis_Lumière)) having created cinema in 1895.[[325]](#cite_note-325) Several important cinematic movements, including the late 1950s and 1960s [Nouvelle Vague](/wiki/Nouvelle_Vague), began in the country. It is noted for having a particularly strong film industry, due in part to protections afforded by the [French government](/wiki/French_government).[[326]](#cite_note-326)[Template:Update after](/wiki/Template:Update_after) France remains a leader in filmmaking, [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of) producing more films than any other European country.[[327]](#cite_note-327) The nation also hosts the [Cannes Festival](/wiki/Cannes_Festival), one of the most important and famous film festivals in the world.[[328]](#cite_note-328)[[329]](#cite_note-329) Apart from its strong and innovative film tradition, France has also been a gathering spot for artists from across Europe and the world. For this reason, French cinema is sometimes intertwined with the cinema of foreign nations. Directors from nations such as Poland ([Roman Polanski](/wiki/Roman_Polanski), [Krzysztof Kieślowski](/wiki/Krzysztof_Kieślowski), and [Andrzej Żuławski](/wiki/Andrzej_Żuławski)), [Argentina](/wiki/Argentina) ([Gaspar Noé](/wiki/Gaspar_Noé) and [Edgardo Cozarinsky](/wiki/Edgardo_Cozarinsky)), Russia ([Alexandre Alexeieff](/wiki/Alexandre_Alexeieff), [Anatole Litvak](/wiki/Anatole_Litvak)), Austria ([Michael Haneke](/wiki/Michael_Haneke)), and [Georgia](/wiki/Georgia_(country)) ([Géla Babluani](/wiki/Géla_Babluani), [Otar Iosseliani](/wiki/Otar_Iosseliani)) are prominent in the ranks of French cinema. Conversely, French directors have had prolific and influential careers in other countries, such as [Luc Besson](/wiki/Luc_Besson), [Jacques Tourneur](/wiki/Jacques_Tourneur), or [Francis Veber](/wiki/Francis_Veber) in the [United States](/wiki/Cinema_of_the_United_States).

Although the French film market is dominated by [Hollywood](/wiki/Hollywood), France is the only nation in the world where American films make up the smallest share of total film revenues, at 50%, compared with 77% in Germany and 69% in Japan.<ref name = erudit>[Template:Fr icon](/wiki/Template:Fr_icon) Damien Rousselière [Cinéma et diversité culturelle: le cinéma indépendant face à la mondialisation des industries culturelles](http://www.erudit.org/revue/hphi/2005/v15/n2/801295ar.pdf). *Horizons philosophiques* Vol. 15 No. 2 2005</ref> French films account for 35% of the total film revenues of France, which is the highest percentage of national film revenues in the developed world outside the United States, compared to 14% in Spain and 8% in the UK.[[330]](#cite_note-330) France is in 2013 the 2nd exporter of films in the world after the United States.[[331]](#cite_note-331) Until recently, France had for centuries been the cultural center of the world,[[332]](#cite_note-332) although its dominant position has been surpassed by the [United States](/wiki/American_culture). Subsequently, France takes steps in protecting and promoting its culture, becoming a leading advocate of the [cultural exception](/wiki/Cultural_exception).[[333]](#cite_note-333) The nation succeeded in convincing all EU members to refuse to include culture and audiovisuals in the list of liberalized sectors of the WTO in 1993.[[334]](#cite_note-334) Moreover, this decision was confirmed in a voting in the [UNESCO](/wiki/UNESCO) in 2005, and the principle of "cultural exception" won an overwhelming victory: 198 countries voted for it, only 2 countries, the U.S and Israel, voted against it.[[335]](#cite_note-335) remained under state-control. It was only in 1981 that the government allowed free broadcasting in the territory, ending state monopoly on radio.[[349]](#cite_note-349) French television was partly liberalized in the next two decade with the creation of several commercial channels, mainly thanks to cable and satellite television. In 2005 the national service [Télévision Numérique Terrestre](/wiki/Télévision_Numérique_Terrestre) introduced digital television all over the territory, allowing the creation of other channels.

The four existing national channels are now owned by state-owned consortium [France Télévisions](/wiki/France_Télévisions), while public broadcasting group [Radio France](/wiki/Radio_France) run five national radio stations. Among these public media are [Radio France Internationale](/wiki/Radio_France_Internationale), which broadcasts programs in French all over the world, and Franco-German TV channel [TV5 Monde](/wiki/TV5_Monde). In 2006, the government created global news channel [France 24](/wiki/France_24). Long-established TV channels [TF1](/wiki/TF1) (privatized in 1987), [France 2](/wiki/France_2) and [France 3](/wiki/France_3) have the highest shares, while radio stations [RTL](/wiki/RTL_(French_radio)), [Europe 1](/wiki/Europe_1) and state-owned [France Inter](/wiki/France_Inter) are the least listened to.

### Society[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=45)]

[thumb|right|220px|alt=Eugène Delacroix painting La Liberté guidant le peuple, woman at barricades holding French flag and advancing|](/wiki/File:Delacroix_-_La_liberte.jpg)[Marianne](/wiki/Marianne), in a painting by [Eugène Delacroix](/wiki/Eugène_Delacroix), *La Liberté guidant le peuple* ([*Liberty Leading the People*](/wiki/Liberty_Leading_the_People)) (1830)

According to a BBC poll in 2010, based on 29,977 responses in 28 countries, France is globally seen as a positive influence in the world's affairs: 49% have a positive view of the country's influence, whereas 19% have a negative view.[[350]](#cite_note-350)[[351]](#cite_note-351) The [Nation Brand Index](/wiki/Nation_Brands_Index) of 2008 suggested that France has the second best international reputation, only behind [Germany](/wiki/Germany#Society).[[352]](#cite_note-352)[thumb|left|150px|alt=Gallic rooster stone statue the Memorial of the soldiers and sailors of the Lower Charente|A Gallic rooster on top of a](/wiki/File:Mémorial_des_soldats_et_marins_de_la_Charente-Inférieure_(16).JPG) [war memorial](/wiki/Monuments_aux_Morts) in [La Rochelle](/wiki/La_Rochelle) According to a poll in 2011, the French were found to have the highest level of religious tolerance and to be the country where the highest proportion of the population defines its identity primarily in term of nationality and not religion.<ref name=pewmwtp>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> 69% of French have a favourable view of the US, making France one of the most pro-American countries in the world.[[353]](#cite_note-353) In January 2010, the [magazine](/wiki/Magazine) [International Living](/wiki/International_Living) ranked France as "best country to live in", ahead of 193 other countries, for the fifth year running.[[354]](#cite_note-354)<ref name = quality>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>

The French Revolution continues to permeate the country's [collective memory](/wiki/Collective_memory). The [tricolour flag](/wiki/Flag_of_France), the anthem "[La Marseillaise](/wiki/La_Marseillaise)", and the motto [Liberté, egalité, fraternité](/wiki/Liberté,_egalité,_fraternité), defined in Title 1 of the [Constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_the_French_Fifth_Republic) as national symbols, all emerged during the cultural ferment of the early revolution, along with [Marianne](/wiki/Marianne), a common [national personification](/wiki/National_personification). In addition, [Bastille Day](/wiki/Bastille_Day), the national holiday, commemorates the [storming of the Bastille](/wiki/Storming_of_the_Bastille) on 14 July 1789.[[355]](#cite_note-355) A common and traditional symbol of the French people is the [Gallic rooster](/wiki/Gallic_rooster). Its origins date back to Antiquity, since the Latin word Gallus meant both "[rooster](/wiki/Rooster)" and "inhabitant of Gaul". Then this figure gradually became the most widely shared representation of the French, used by French monarchs, then by the Revolution and under the successive republican regimes as representation of the national identity, used for some stamps and coins.[[356]](#cite_note-356)

### Cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=46)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|alt=plate of Foie gras with mustard seeds and green onions on yellow plate|](/wiki/File:Foie_gras_en_cocotte.jpg)[*Foie gras*](/wiki/Foie_gras) with mustard seeds and green onions in duck [jus](/wiki/Au_jus). Foie gras belongs to the protected gastronomical heritage of France.[[357]](#cite_note-357)

French cuisine is renowned for being one of the finest in the world.[[358]](#cite_note-358)[[359]](#cite_note-359) According to the regions, traditional recipes are different, the North of the country prefers to use butter as the preferred fat for cooking, whereas [olive oil](/wiki/Olive_oil) is more commonly used in the South.[[360]](#cite_note-360) Moreover, each region of France has iconic traditional specialities: [Cassoulet](/wiki/Cassoulet) in the Southwest, [Choucroute](/wiki/Choucroute) in Alsace, [Quiche](/wiki/Quiche) in the [Lorraine region](/wiki/Lorraine_(region)), [Beef bourguignon](/wiki/Beef_bourguignon) in the [Bourgogne](/wiki/Burgundy), [provençal](/wiki/Provence) [Tapenade](/wiki/Tapenade), etc. France's most renowned products are [wines](/wiki/French_wine),[[361]](#cite_note-361) including [Champagne](/wiki/Champagne), [Bordeaux](/wiki/Bordeaux_wine), [Bourgogne](/wiki/Burgundy_wine), and [Beaujolais](/wiki/Beaujolais) as well as a large variety of different [cheeses](/wiki/List_of_French_cheeses), such as [Camembert](/wiki/Camembert), [Roquefort](/wiki/Roquefort_(cheese)) and [Brie](/wiki/Brie_cheese). There are more than 400 different varieties.[[362]](#cite_note-362)[[363]](#cite_note-363) A meal often consists of three courses, *hors d'œuvre* or *entrée* (introductory course, sometimes soup), *plat principal* (main course), *fromage* (cheese course) and/or *dessert*, sometimes with a salad offered before the cheese or dessert. Hors d'œuvres include terrine de saumon au basilic, lobster bisque, [foie gras](/wiki/Foie_gras), [French onion soup](/wiki/French_onion_soup) or a [croque monsieur](/wiki/Croque_monsieur). The plat principal could include a [pot au feu](/wiki/Pot_au_feu) or [steak frites](/wiki/Steak_frites). The dessert could be [mille-feuille](/wiki/Mille-feuille) pastry, a [macaron](/wiki/Macaron), an [éclair](/wiki/Éclair), [crème brûlée](/wiki/Crème_brûlée), [mousse au chocolat](/wiki/Chocolate_mousse), [crêpes](/wiki/Crêpe), or [Café liégeois](/wiki/Café_liégeois).

French cuisine is also regarded as a key element of the [quality of life](/wiki/Quality_of_life) and the attractiveness of France.[[364]](#cite_note-364) A French publication, the [Michelin guide](/wiki/Michelin_guide), awards *Michelin stars* for excellence to a select few establishments.[[365]](#cite_note-365) The acquisition or loss of a star can have dramatic effects on the success of a restaurant. By 2006, the Michelin Guide had awarded 620 stars to French restaurants, at that time more than any other country, although the guide also inspects more restaurants in France than in any other country (by 2010, Japan was awarded as many Michelin stars as France, despite having half the number of Michelin inspectors working there).[[366]](#cite_note-366)[[367]](#cite_note-367) In addition to it wine tradition, France is also a major producer of beer. The three main French brewing regions are Alsace (60% of national production), the Nord-Pas-de-Calais and Lorraine. A meal often consists of three courses, *hors d'œuvre* or *entrée* (introductory course, sometimes soup), *plat principal* (main course), *fromage* (cheese course) or *dessert*, sometimes with a salad offered before the cheese or dessert.[[368]](#cite_note-368) <Gallery perrow="6"> File:French taste of wines.JPG|[French wines](/wiki/French_wines) are usually made to accompany French cuisine File:Frenchonionsoupbirmingham.jpg|[*French onion soup*](/wiki/French_onion_soup) File:200501 - 6 fromages.JPG|Some [French cheeses](/wiki/French_cheese) File:Creme Brulee.jpeg|[*Crème brûlée*](/wiki/Crème_brûlée) File:Quiche.jpg|250px|[*Quiche*](/wiki/Quiche) File:Arc-en-ciel comestible.jpg|250px |[Macaron](/wiki/Macaron) </Gallery>

### Sports[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=47)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|alt=Tour de France pelleton 9th of July 2005 at the begin of the ascend to Cote de Bad Herrenalb|Starting in 1903, the](/wiki/File:TourDeFrance_2005_07_09.jpg) [Tour de France](/wiki/Tour_de_France) is the oldest and most prestigious of [Grands Tours](/wiki/Grand_Tour_(cycling)), and the world's most famous cycling race.[[369]](#cite_note-369) Popular sports played in France include [football](/wiki/Association_football), [judo](/wiki/Judo), [tennis](/wiki/Tennis)[[370]](#cite_note-370) and [rugby union](/wiki/Rugby_union).[[371]](#cite_note-371) France has hosted events such as the [1938](/wiki/1938_FIFA_World_Cup) and [1998 FIFA World Cups](/wiki/1998_FIFA_World_Cup),[[372]](#cite_note-372) and the [2007 Rugby World Cup](/wiki/2007_Rugby_World_Cup).[[373]](#cite_note-373) France will host [UEFA Euro 2016](/wiki/UEFA_Euro_2016). The [Stade de France](/wiki/Stade_de_France) in [Saint-Denis](/wiki/Saint-Denis,_Seine-Saint-Denis) is France's largest stadium and was the venue for the 1998 FIFA World Cup and 2007 Rugby World Cup finals. Since 1903, France hosts the annual [Tour de France](/wiki/Tour_de_France), the most famous [road bicycle race](/wiki/Road_bicycle_race) in the world.[[374]](#cite_note-374)[[375]](#cite_note-375) France is famous for its [24 Hours of Le Mans](/wiki/24_Hours_of_Le_Mans) [sports car](/wiki/Sports_car_racing) [endurance race](/wiki/Endurance_racing_(motorsport)).[[376]](#cite_note-376) Several major tennis tournaments take place in France, including the [Paris Masters](/wiki/Paris_Masters) and the [French Open](/wiki/French_Open), one of the four [Grand Slam](/wiki/Grand_Slam_(tennis)) tournaments. French [martial arts](/wiki/Martial_arts) include [Savate](/wiki/Savate) and [Fencing](/wiki/Fencing).

France has a close association with the Modern Olympic Games; it was a French aristocrat, Baron [Pierre de Coubertin](/wiki/Pierre_de_Coubertin), who suggested the Games' revival, at the end of the 19th century.[[377]](#cite_note-377)<ref name=Olympic>[Olympic History](http://www.worldatlas.com/aatlas/infopage/olympic.htm) – World Atlas of Travel</ref> After [Athens](/wiki/Athens) was awarded the first Games, in reference to the Olympics' Greek origins, Paris hosted the second Games [in 1900](/wiki/1900_Summer_Olympics).[[378]](#cite_note-378) Paris was the first home of the [International Olympic Committee](/wiki/International_Olympic_Committee), before it moved to [Lausanne](/wiki/Lausanne).[[379]](#cite_note-379) Since 1900, France has hosted the Olympics on 4 further occasions: the [1924 Summer Olympics](/wiki/1924_Summer_Olympics), again in Paris[[380]](#cite_note-380) and three [Winter Games](/wiki/Winter_Olympic_Games) ([1924](/wiki/1924_Winter_Olympics) in [Chamonix](/wiki/Chamonix), [1968](/wiki/1968_Winter_Olympics) in [Grenoble](/wiki/Grenoble) and [1992](/wiki/1992_Winter_Olympics) in [Albertville](/wiki/Albertville)).[[381]](#cite_note-381) [thumb|right|alt=soccer match at the Stade de France for the 1998 FIFA World Cup|The](/wiki/File:Finale_Coupe_de_France_2010-2011_(Lille_LOSC_vs_Paris_SG_PSG).jpg) [Stade de France](/wiki/Stade_de_France) was built for the [1998 FIFA World Cup](/wiki/1998_FIFA_World_Cup), and is listed as a [UEFA category four stadium](/wiki/UEFA_stadium_categories).

Both the [national football team](/wiki/France_national_football_team) and the [national rugby union team](/wiki/France_national_rugby_union_team) are nicknamed "*Les Bleus*" in reference to the team's shirt colour as well as the national [French tricolour flag](/wiki/Flag_of_France). Football is the most popular sport in France, with over 1,800,000 registered players, and over 18,000 registered clubs.[[382]](#cite_note-382) The football team is among the most successful in the world, particularly at the start of the 21st century, with one [FIFA World Cup](/wiki/FIFA_World_Cup) victory in 1998,[[383]](#cite_note-383) one FIFA World Cup second place in 2006,[[384]](#cite_note-384) and two [UEFA European Championships](/wiki/UEFA_European_Championship) in [1984](/wiki/UEFA_Euro_1984)[[385]](#cite_note-385) and [2000](/wiki/UEFA_Euro_2000).[[386]](#cite_note-386) The top national football club competition is [Ligue 1](/wiki/Ligue_1). France has produced some of the greatest players in the world, including three time FIFA World Player of the Year [Zinedine Zidane](/wiki/Zinedine_Zidane), three time [Ballon d'Or](/wiki/Ballon_d'Or) recipient [Michel Platini](/wiki/Michel_Platini), record holder for most goals scored at a World Cup [Just Fontaine](/wiki/Just_Fontaine), first football player to receive the [Légion d'honneur](/wiki/Légion_d'honneur) [Raymond Kopa](/wiki/Raymond_Kopa), and the all-time leading goalscorer for the French national team [Thierry Henry](/wiki/Thierry_Henry).[[387]](#cite_note-387) [Rugby union](/wiki/Rugby_union) is popular, particularly in Paris and the southwest of France.[[388]](#cite_note-388) The national rugby union team has competed at every [Rugby World Cup](/wiki/Rugby_World_Cup), and takes part in the annual [Six Nations Championship](/wiki/Six_Nations_Championship). Stemming from a [strong domestic league](/wiki/Top_14), the French rugby team has won 16 Six Nations Championships, including 8 [grand slams](/wiki/Grand_Slam_(rugby_union)); and has reached the semi-final of the Rugby World Cup 6 times and the final 3 times.

[Rugby league in France](/wiki/Rugby_league_in_France) is a sport that is most popular in the south, in cities such as [Perpignan](/wiki/Perpignan) and [Toulouse](/wiki/Toulouse). The [Catalans Dragons](/wiki/Catalans_Dragons) currently play in the [Super League](/wiki/Super_League), which is the top tier rugby league competition in Europe. The [Elite One Championship](/wiki/Elite_One_Championship) is the professional competition for rugby league clubs in France.

In recent decades, France has produced world-elite basketball players, most notably [Tony Parker](/wiki/Tony_Parker). The [French National Basketball Team](/wiki/France_national_basketball_team) won gold at the [FIBA EuroBasket 2013](/wiki/FIBA_EuroBasket_2013). The national team has won two Olympic Silver Medals: in [2000](/wiki/Basketball_at_the_2000_Summer_Olympics) and [1948](/wiki/Basketball_at_the_1948_Summer_Olympics).

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=48)]

* [Outline of France](/wiki/Outline_of_France)

## Footnotes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=49)]

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## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=50)]

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## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=51)]

[Template:Wikibooks](/wiki/Template:Wikibooks) [Template:Sister project links](/wiki/Template:Sister_project_links)

* [France](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17298730) from the [BBC News](/wiki/BBC_News)
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* [France.fr (in English)](http://www.france.fr/en) Official French tourism website
* [Template:Fr icon](/wiki/Template:Fr_icon) [Official Site of the Government](http://www.gouvernement.fr/)
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