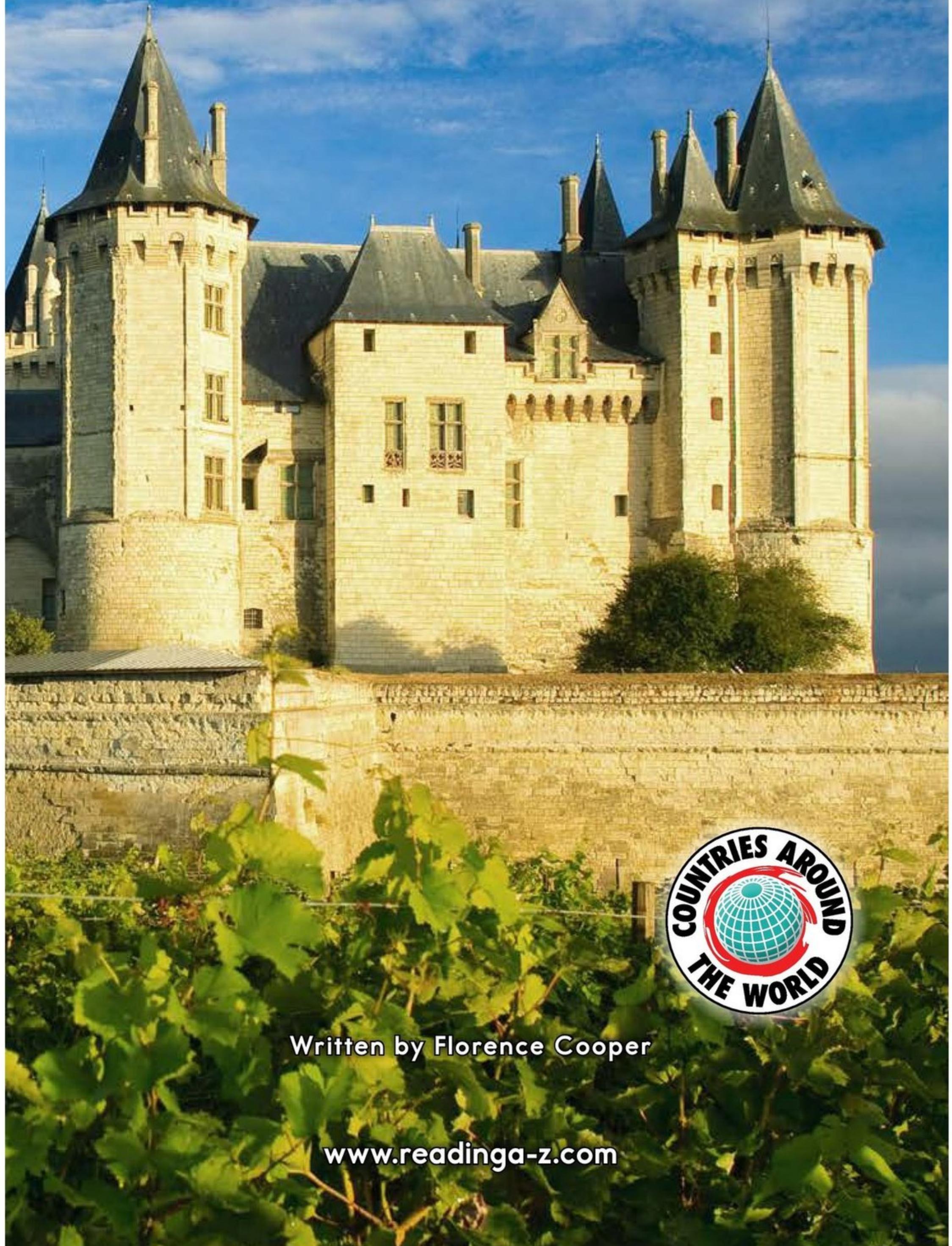


LEVELED BOOKS

France



Written by Florence Cooper

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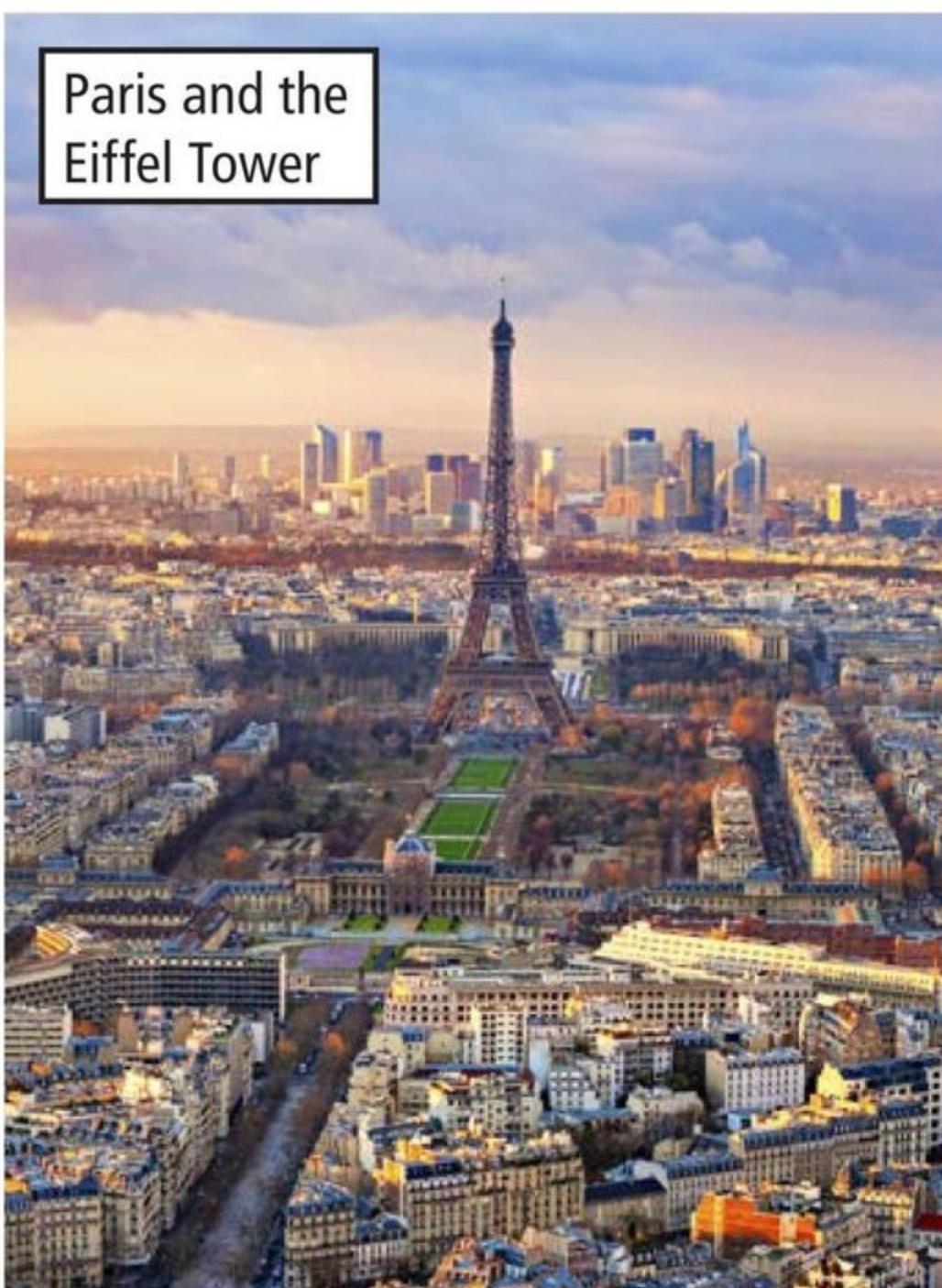
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Where Is It?

France is the largest country in western Europe. To the northeast of France are Belgium and Luxembourg. To the east are Italy, Germany, and Switzerland, and to the south is Spain. The United Kingdom and Ireland lie across the English Channel to the northwest.

France is bordered by water on two sides. To the west is the Atlantic Ocean, and to the northwest is the English Channel. To the southeast is the Mediterranean Sea.



The capital of France is Paris, a city known around the world for its beauty. Millions of people visit Paris each year to see its famous landmarks. These sites include the Eiffel (EYE-ful) Tower, Notre Dame (no-truh DAHM) **Cathedral**, and the Louvre (LOO-vruh) art museum. A monument called the *Arc de Triomphe* (ARK du tree-OHMF) stands over one of the city's main streets, the Champs-Élysées (SHAHM-zay-lee-ZAY).

More than ten million people live in Paris. The city is France's center for both business and culture. Paris is also considered one of the **fashion** capitals of the world.



Paris and other cities are filled with restaurants and hotels for the more than eighty-two million tourists who visit France.

People

More than sixty-six million people live in France. Most people live and work in its cities and towns. **Tourism** is the largest service industry in France. In fact, France is the most visited country in the world! Many people work in hotels, restaurants, and museums that welcome these millions of visitors.

Many French people also work in factories that produce goods such as cars, aircraft, and clothing. Other factories make chemicals and process food. Some people work in mines, digging resources such as coal out of the ground.



Workers harvest grapes from a vineyard in France. The grapes are used mainly to make wine.

More than half of the country's land is used for farming. French farmers grow wheat, grain, sugar beets, and potatoes. Others raise animals, including cattle, hogs, and sheep. Some also grow grapes in **vineyards**.

The majority of people in France are Roman Catholic. Others are Protestant, Muslim, or Jewish. The country's main language is French, although people speak different **dialects** depending on the area.

France's Landforms



Land

France has many different landforms, including hills, forests, mountains, rivers, lakes, and beaches. France is mostly covered in flat plains and low, rolling hills. It also has high plateaus.

The Seine (SEN) River runs through Paris, and, along with smaller rivers, drains the Paris Basin. The country is also known for its beautiful beaches, especially along the Mediterranean Sea.



Mont Blanc, located in the French Alps, is the tallest mountain in western Europe.

France has five different mountain ranges. The most well-known ranges are the French Alps and the Pyrenees (PEER-uh-neez). The French Alps are part of the larger Alps mountain range that runs through many countries. The French Alps lie along the border between France, Switzerland, and Italy. The Pyrenees lie along the border between France and Spain.

A large plateau spreads across southern France. It has ancient mountains and volcanoes, which are no longer active, as well as deep river **gorges**. France also includes some islands. The largest is Corsica, which is located off the southern coast in the Mediterranean Sea.

History

France has a long history. Experts believe that early humans lived in what is now France nearly two million years ago. More than two thousand years ago, France was known as Gaul. The people who lived there were called *Celts*.

Around 50 BC, the Roman Empire took over Gaul and ruled the land for about five hundred years.

Around AD 400, German tribes took Gaul from the Romans. These German people were called *Franks*. They named the land *Francia*, which is how France got its name. For the next thousand years, powerful kings ruled France.

In 800, a French king named Charlemagne (SHAR-luh-mayn) became leader of the Holy Roman Empire. This empire included France and parts of what are now Belgium, Germany, and Italy. However, the empire fell apart after Charlemagne died in 814.



Early humans painted animals on the walls of a cave in Lascaux (la-SKOH), France.

From about 1066 to 1453, many wars were fought over the land of France. Most of these wars were between France and England. This began in 1066 when a group from Normandy, a region in France, invaded England. Another famous war between the two countries began in 1337 and lasted until 1453. Today it is known as the Hundred Years War.

For hundreds of years, France was ruled by kings, many of whom treated the people poorly. In 1789, the people rebelled against the king and the French Revolution began. France became a republic in 1792, though the revolution would not end until 1799. The French overthrew two more leaders, setting up new governments each time. Today, France is a republic with a strong democracy.



Louis XIV

One of France's greatest kings was Louis (LEW-ee) XIV. He ruled from 1643 to 1715, the longest a king has ever ruled in Europe. He fought many wars, expanded France's borders, and built a lavish palace called Versailles (vehr-SEYE).



On Bastille Day, veterans of France's armed forces often lead the parades.

Celebrations

The French celebrate many different holidays. The French Revolution began on July 14, which is now known as Bastille Day. On that day in 1789, the French people stormed the Bastille, a prison in Paris. They took control of the building so they could set the prisoners free. Today, the French people celebrate their freedom with parades and fireworks.

Mardi Gras (MAR-dee GRAH) is another popular holiday. Mardi Gras is a Roman Catholic holiday held about six weeks before the Easter holiday. Many cities and towns have huge **carnivals** with parades and floats. People dress in costumes and dance in the streets.



cheese



crêpes



baguettes

More than five hundred different kinds of cheese are made in France. Crêpes (KRAYPS), which are thin pancakes, and baguettes are also very common.

Food

France is famous for its food and cooking styles. Many French people consider good food to be one of the most important parts of life. One type of popular French cooking usually includes rich dishes made with butter, cream, eggs, and other flavors.

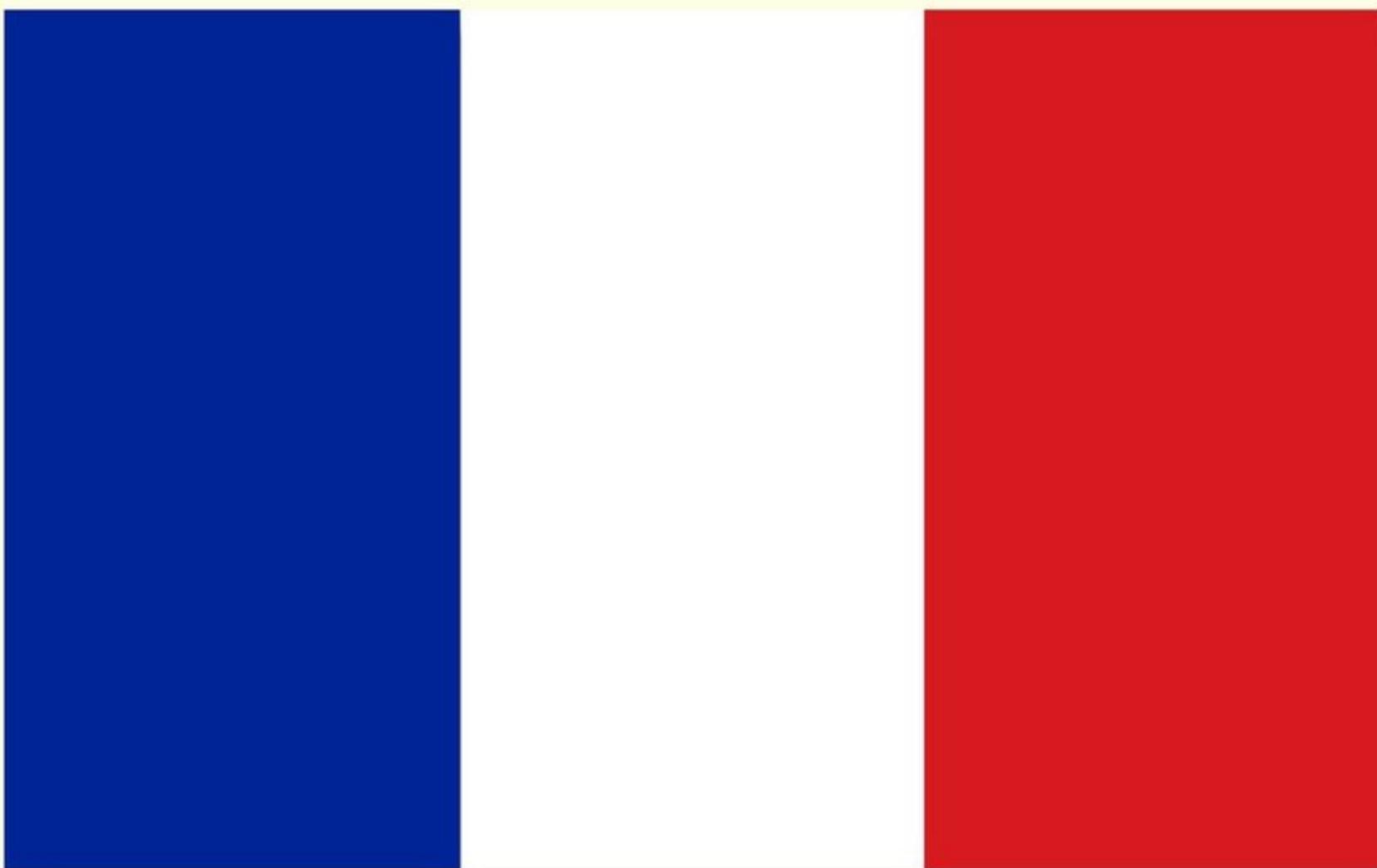
The French enjoy many different types of fresh bread, and it is served at most meals. Breads are often sold as **baguettes** (ba-GETS), or long, thin loaves. France is also famous for its many different kinds of cheese. Many areas in France offer their very own type of cheese.



The sidewalk cafes are popular in many parts of France.

Conclusion

France is a modern country with a long and interesting history. Its past is filled with powerful kings and empires. Today, France is the most visited country in the world. People travel from all over the world to see its beautiful cities, villages, and castles and to eat its rich foods. Vineyards and farms dot its rolling hills and plains. Delicious foods such as cheeses and fresh breads fill its shops. If you were to visit France, what would you like to see first?



Population: 66,259,012

Land: 620,427 sq km (239,548 sq. mi.)

Capital City: Paris

Primary Language: French

Primary Religion: Roman Catholic

Currency: Euro (YUR-oh)



Source: Central Intelligence Agency (July 2014), World Bank

Glossary

- baguettes** (*n.*) long, thin loaves of bread, typically made in France (p. 13)
- basin** (*n.*) a depression, or low area, in the surface of the earth (p. 8)
- carnivals** (*n.*) festivals (p. 12)
- cathedral** (*n.*) a large church (p. 5)
- dialects** (*n.*) forms of language that are used in specific regions or by specific groups of people (p. 7)
- fashion** (*n.*) popular or current styles of clothing (p. 5)
- gorges** (*n.*) long, deep valleys surrounded by higher land (p. 9)
- tourism** (*n.*) the business of providing services for people traveling to a place for pleasure (p. 6)
- vineyards** (*n.*) fields where grapes are grown, usually for making wine (p. 7)

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Front and back cover: Chateau de Saumur is an old castle located in the Loire Valley of France.

Title page: The Eiffel (EYE-ful) Tower in Paris was named for the man who designed it, Gustave Eiffel.

Page 3: France hosts the Tour de France, the most difficult bicycle race in the world, every July.

France

Countries Around the World
Level S Leveled Book
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