

# France, art de vivre, history and culture



Easy access  
to recreational  
and cultural  
activities



# Living in France

Studying in France also means living in France and discovering the distinctive French way of life.



## Students enjoy special advantages in France that make life more enjoyable

An extensive system of discounts, assistance, and special facilities allows students to stretch a relatively modest budget to cover basic needs—and to enjoy life in France. Benefits include a network of student restaurants, university housing, rent subsidies, health insurance, student clubs and associations, and discounts on public transportation, movies, museums, libraries, and sporting events.

## Sports and cultural activities

More than 2,000 cinemas, 1,200 museums, and 33,000 theatrical performances attest to the vitality of everyday cultural life in Paris and throughout France. Festivals of music, song, and dance; athletic events; and celebrations of books, food, and science round out the cultural life for which France is rightly famous.

## Students enjoy discounts and special subscription prices at all cultural events.

Student status also makes it easy to stay active in sports through discounted access to athletic facilities. Rare is the campus that does not host a wide range athletic clubs, associations, and leagues.

Many universities and schools are located in city centers, offering easy access to the rich social and cultural life of France's lively cities. Museums, bookstores, theaters, and cafés are never very far away.

Campus France will help you prepare for departure and offer support upon your arrival in France.



## Helpful briefs on coming to France

This set of briefs sets out in practical detail everything the student needs to know about travel arrangements and arriving in France. Organized chronologically ("A month before departure," "A week before departure," "Upon arrival," "Your first week," and so on), the briefs help students prepare in a practical way for their departure, to prioritize their first steps, to identify urgent tasks, and, in so doing, to ensure a smooth arrival in France.



## Enjoy French culture shock An A to Z Handbook for Student and Daily Life in France

This pocket guide in French and English, organized like a dictionary in which the entries are color coded by theme (culture, academic life, health ...), enables the user to quickly find expressions, acronyms, and various features of daily life as a student in France. Upon return, the guide will be a souvenir of the student's experience in France.

# Housing in France

Before looking for a place to live in France, students must decide, in light of their financial means and the length of their program, what sort of housing arrangement is best for them. Housing is relatively expensive in France, but international students, like French students, enjoy the benefit of housing assistance.

## University residence halls

Located on campus or in town, university residences are run by France's regional student service centers (CROUS, *Centres régionaux des œuvres universitaires et scolaires*). The residences feature furnished rooms and studios, generally well-equipped. The monthly rent is between €120\* and €350\*. Space in university residence halls remains in very short supply, however, especially in Paris, where priority is given to the recipients of French government scholarships and students participating in exchange programs. [www.cnous.fr](http://www.cnous.fr) (*Centre National des Œuvres Universitaires et Scolaires*)

**Note:** In contrast to the situation at France's universities, most *Grandes Écoles* and private institutions have a good supply of on-campus housing. Rents range from €250\* to €500\* per month.

## Privately operated student housing

Private buildings designed for students are found in most large cities. Most have been built in recent years to compensate for the shortage of university housing. Rents range from €600\* to €700\* per month in Paris and from €400\* to €800\* elsewhere.

## Private-sector rentals

Renters are generally required to make a deposit to guarantee the payment of rent. Rents are high, especially in large cities, and above all in Paris. In general, renters must show proof that their monthly income is at least three times the rental amount.

## Shared rentals

**Property rentals to groups.** Several individuals may enter into a lease with a property owner, with each having equal rights to the property. No special regulations apply to such rentals. All tenants have the same rights and obligations as does a single tenant who executes a lease. Anyone who wishes to apply for housing assistance must ensure that his or her name appears on the lease.

## Note

Joint-responsibility clauses are often added to group-rental agreements and apply for the entire term of the lease. Such clauses mean that if one tenant does not pay his or her share of the rent, the property owner may try to collect it from the other tenants.

## Subletting

In principle, tenants may not rent their accommodations to others. Before a tenant sublets all or part of the rented property to another individual, he or she must obtain the prior written consent of the property owner, who has the right to demand the immediate termination of the lease and the payment of an occupancy fee. The law states that the tenant may not collect from a sub-tenant a rent greater than that which he or she owes to the property owner. French regulations on subletting: [www.souslouer.com](http://www.souslouer.com)

## Rooms in private houses

More suitable for short stays, renting a furnished room in a private home may cost €200\* a week in Paris with breakfast included, or €300\* with breakfast and dinner. Costs are lower outside Paris.

## Intergenerational housing

Several organizations have matched older people who have a spare room to rent with students looking for a place to live. The older individual, who may be a property owner or a tenant, must offer a suitable room, which may be furnished or unfurnished, with free access to the common areas of the property (kitchen, bathroom, living room). The student agrees to be a "good neighbor," to exercise reasonable care and vigilance, to perform "small favors" to facilitate the daily life of the older person, and to pay a portion of the utility and maintenance charges (such as water and electricity).

To use the services of an organization providing intergenerational rentals, the student generally must pay a yearly fee to the organization (typically between €100 and €350 depending on the type of lodging found), in addition to application fees (around €15).

◆ [www.campusfrance.org](http://www.campusfrance.org)

**For more information and links related to housing assistance:**

[www.campusfrance.org](http://www.campusfrance.org) > Living in France > Housing

**Support services offered by universities and other institutions of higher education:**

[www.campusfrance.org](http://www.campusfrance.org) > Resource center > Student service profiles

\*\* These prices do not include any housing assistance for which the student may be eligible.

## Housing assistance

International students, like French students, may be eligible for housing assistance.

There are two types of assistance, depending on the type of housing one occupies. The two forms of assistance, which cannot be combined, are **social housing assistance (ALS, *allocation de logement à caractère social*)** and **personal housing assistance (APL, *aide personnalisée au logement*)**. The amount of assistance varies with the rent to be paid and the student's circumstances.

If you are sharing an apartment, you and your roommate may both receive assistance, provided both your names appear on the lease.

Information and eligibility criteria can be obtained from the Caisse d'Allocations Familiales (CAF, family assistance fund) serving the area in which you live. [www.caf.fr](http://www.caf.fr)

Many housing-related links can be found on the Campus France Web site



# Working in France

## While in school

**Students from the member countries of the European Economic Space (plus Switzerland)** may work freely and without restriction while studying in France. As long as they do not neglect their academic work, they may combine employment with scholarships or other financial assistance.

Since July 1, 2007, French law has allowed **other international students** to work under the following conditions: A residency permit (VLS-TS, validated by OFII, or a residency permit in addition to a visa) marked "student" entitles the student to accept paid employment for **up to 60% of the legally defined work year (or 964 hours per year), without prior administrative authorization.**

**Note:** The time that students spend in internships connected with their academic program (and covered by a written internship agreement) are not counted toward the maximum allowable working hours, even if the student is compensated during the internship.

**The minimum gross hourly wage, set by law, is €9.40.** Withholding reduces the worker's net wage by about 20%.

## Working at a public institution of higher education

International students are eligible for student jobs at universities and other public institutions of higher education. Students are hired to provide the following services: assisting incoming students; helping disabled students; providing tutoring; providing IT support and assistance; coordinating and staffing cultural, athletic, and social events; wor-

king in the career center; and supporting their institution's promotional efforts.

Student employment contracts are offered for a period not to exceed 12 months. They run from September 1 through August 31. Students may work up to 670 hours between September 1 and June 30, and up to 300 hours between July 1 and August 31.

## After graduation

• **International students holding a degree equivalent to a master or above** International students who have earned a degree that is equivalent to a European master or above may seek authorization to reside in France from 6 months to 1 year after the expiration of their student residency permit. This authorization, which is not renewable, allows the graduate to work for up to 60% of the legal work week.

If the employment contract is related to the subject of the graduate's degree program and if it provides compensation that is equal to or greater than 150% of the minimum wage, the prospective employee may apply to the local prefecture for change of status from student to employee. Once authorization is granted (it is not granted automatically), the individual may begin working full time.

### • Other students

Accepting an offer of employment from a French firm after graduation implies a change in status (from student to employee). Graduates apply for the change by submitting their employment contract or offer of employment.

◆ [www.campusfrance.org](http://www.campusfrance.org)

>Living in France >Working

# Insurance



## Medical insurance

• **Students from countries outside the European Economic Space** who are under 28 years of age on October 1 and enrolled in a recognized educational institution for a program of at least 3 months' duration **are automatically enrolled in the student segment of the national health insurance plan**, part of France's social protection system. Students join the plan when they register at their educational institution. The cost of participation is about €200. Some students (notably scholarship recipients) are exempted from paying the fee.

After age 28, non-European students must join the social security system through the health insurance consortium closest to their residence. Addresses for those organizations, known as *caisses primaires d'assurance maladie* (or CPAMs), can be found on the Web site of the social security system: [www.ameli.fr](http://www.ameli.fr)

• **Students from within the European Economic Space** (plus Switzerland) may take advantage of the French social security system without additional cost provided they obtain a European Health Insurance Card valid for the entire academic year.

• **All other students** (those staying for less than 3 months, and students enrolled in institutions that do not participate in the French social security system) must purchase an individual medical insurance policy from a private insurance company. In France, the annual cost of such policies runs from €150 to €550.

On average, social security covers about 70% of the expenses related to an illness. Students may obtain supplemental health insurance coverage.

The three largest student group-health plans are:

La Mutuelle des Étudiants: [www.lmde.fr](http://www.lmde.fr), active throughout France;

Emevia, an association of regional student health plans: [www.emevia.com](http://www.emevia.com);

and Smerep: [www.smerep.fr](http://www.smerep.fr).

## Multirisk renter's insurance

**All dwellings must be insured against risks** such as theft, fire, and water damage. Insurance can be purchased from private companies.

Multirisk home insurance **includes liability coverage**, meaning that the policy holder is insured against claims from third parties who may be injured in an accident on the premises.

**Note:** Other types of insurance are also available, such as automobile insurance, insurance for participation in a sport, and insurance for repatriation of remains in case of death.



French law permits international students to work

Some forms of insurance are obligatory



# Cultural life

France's vibrant cultural life offers students access to culture on a daily basis. Even outside Paris, the proliferation of cultural sites is proof of the country's creative effervescence.

Consider, for example, music festivals such as the *Vieilles Charrues* in Carhaix, the *Folles Journées* in Nantes, the *Eurockéennes* in Belfort, Jazz in Marciac, and the *Transmusicales* in Rennes; the film festivals in Cannes, Deauville, Avoriaz, and Cognac; dance festivals such as the *Biennale de la Danse* in Lyon and the *Part des Anges* in Bordeaux; the theater festivals of Avignon and Aurillac; the renowned comic art festival in Angoulême; and national events such as the *Journées du Patrimoine* and the *Fête de la Musique* on the first day of summer.

## Cinema

595 feature films released last year (including 293 from France) sold 217 million tickets: [www.culture.fr](http://www.culture.fr) >Ressource >Cinéma/Multimedia

## Theater

Nearly 25,000 performances of classical and contemporary works took place in 2012: [www.culture.fr](http://www.culture.fr) >Ressource >Théâtre/Danse

## Music

44,000 performances were given and 22 million tickets sold for concerts and variety shows: [www.culture.fr](http://www.culture.fr) >Ressource >Musique/Concert

## Museums and monuments

7,000 museums operate throughout France. Although the Eiffel Tower remains the country's most visited attraction, more than 40,000 other sites and structures have been designated as historic landmarks, among them the

chateaux of the Loire, Mont St. Michel, the Château d'If, the Roman arenas in Nîmes, and the port of La Rochelle.

List of national museums: [www.culture.fr](http://www.culture.fr) >Ressources >Architecture-Patrimoine

## Books

The affordable Livre de Poche series, offered at €6, puts books within reach, no matter what one's budget. Numerous book-related events in Paris and around the country attest to the French interest in reading:

[www.centrenationaldulivre.fr](http://www.centrenationaldulivre.fr)

## Print media

France's print media are distinguished by their diversity: special-interest magazines, daily newspapers, and national and regional weeklies and monthlies. Every city and region has a newspaper that provides national, international, regional, and even the most local of news. Examples include the Sud-Ouest in Aquitaine, Ouest-France in Brittany, and La Provence in Marseille:

[www.presseregionale.fr](http://www.presseregionale.fr)

## Libraries

France has more than 3,000 libraries. Anyone can obtain a free library card at his or her local library; the card can be used at any library in the town or city system.

## University libraries

Every institution of higher education possesses at least one library. Hours vary but include evenings (until 10 pm) and Sundays. France's 127 university and institutional libraries possess more than 40 million books. The catalog of the university documentation system is available at [www.sudoc.abes.fr](http://www.sudoc.abes.fr)

# Clubs and special-interest groups

With more than 2 million associations, France's people have woven a vast fabric of voluntary ties, of which student clubs are an important part. Special-interest groups enable students to get together for extra-curricular activities such as festivals, expositions, concerts, lectures, trips, hikes, tours, evening activities, and more.

Through clubs and associations students also engage in a wide variety of humanitarian, athletic, economic, and cultural activities in which they have the opportunity to play a variety of roles, such as chairman of a festival, treasurer of a student business club, or spokesperson for a cultural project. Such involvements can make valuable additions to their resume. Through alumni associations students can maintain ties with their academic institution after graduation and benefit from contacts with other graduates.

Directory of French associations: [www.asso1901.com](http://www.asso1901.com)



## Universities

On university campuses, one often finds dozens of cultural, disciplinary, athletic, or career-related associations. Some are devoted to providing support for new students, including international students, or to organizing cooperative services (supplies, coffee houses, course packs, and so on).



A university entity known as the Fonds de Solidarité et de Développement des Initiatives Etudiantes (FSDIE, fund for support and development of student initiatives) helps support activities organized by student groups.

FSDIE: [www.etudiantdeparis.fr/ressources/aides-universites](http://www.etudiantdeparis.fr/ressources/aides-universites)

Animafac is a network for the exchange of experience and resources among more than 12,000 student associations: [www.animafac.net](http://www.animafac.net)

ESN, Erasmus student Network: [www.esn.org](http://www.esn.org)

## Grandes Écoles

Each of the *Grandes Écoles* has a "student office," a student-elected association that organizes extracurricular activities such as nights out, welcome parties for new students, and cultural events. The student offices also help to manage cafeterias and student cooperatives. Many schools also support career-related associations such as business or project incubators that enable students to prepare for life after graduation and to gain experience that will give them a leg up in the labor market.

All cultural sites offer discounts and subscriptions for students



France's 2 million associations constitute a vast fabric of voluntary ties that extends throughout France

# How much does it cost?

Taking into account the many discounts for which students are eligible, the average monthly student budget is €1,000 in Paris and €800 elsewhere in the country.

## Food, meals

- 1 *baguette*: €0,80
- 1 coffee: €1 - 2
- 1 Camembert cheese: €2
- 1 croissant: €1
- 1 kg of pasta: €1
- 1 kg of potatoes: €1,20
- 1 kg of rice: €1,90
- 1 liter of milk: €1,20
- 6 eggs: €1,50
- 1 meal at a university cafeteria: €3,15
- 1 fast-food meal: €7
- 1 meal at neighborhood restaurant: €10 - 20
- 1 sandwich: €3 - 5



## Health

### Medical visit

- **General practitioner:** €23 and up (of which €14 is reimbursed)
- **Psychiatry, neuropsychiatry, neurology:** €37 euros and up (€24 reimbursed)
- **Gynecology - ophthalmology:** €28 euros and up (€19 reimbursed)
- **Specialist:** €25 euros and up (€19 reimbursed)
- **Dentist:** €30 euros and up depending on service rendered

## Culture, leisure

- **1 month of Internet access:** €20-50 depending on the plan or bundle (Internet, TV, telephone, unlimited calling to certain countries).
- **1 cell phone plan:** starting at €30 per month depending on provider. Plan prices vary in the amount of calling time and data transmission they offer. Prepaid cards starting at €5 are sold in licensed tobacco shops.
- **1 student-rate movie ticket:** about €7.50. Some national theater chains offer unlimited monthly admission cards for €30.
- **1 museum admission:** €5-10
- **1 student-rate swimming pool admission:** €1.70
- **1 newspaper:** €1.20
- **1 DVD player:** €50 - 150
- **1 MP3 player:** €20 - 150
- **1 paperback book:** about €6
- **1 night in budget hotel (\*\*):** €60
- **1 theater ticket:** €10 - 30



## Transportation

- **1 round-trip Paris-Barcelona air ticket:** €100-150
- **1 round-trip Paris-Brussels-Amsterdam Thalys rail ticket:** €100-120
- **1 round-trip Paris-London Eurostar rail ticket:** €100-150
- **1 round-trip Paris-Nice TGV (high-speed train) ticket:** €140. If reserved far enough in advance, tickets can be as cheap as €50.
- **1 monthly public transportation pass in Paris:** from €60 (Paris proper) to €123 (outlying suburbs)
- **1 liter of gasoline:** €1.40
- **1 city bike:** €1 per day in Paris, but free for the first 30 minutes. Public bike rentals (through Vélib', Vélov, V3) are available in several large cities. Prices vary.

The cost of daily life may be twice as high in Paris as in other parts of France

