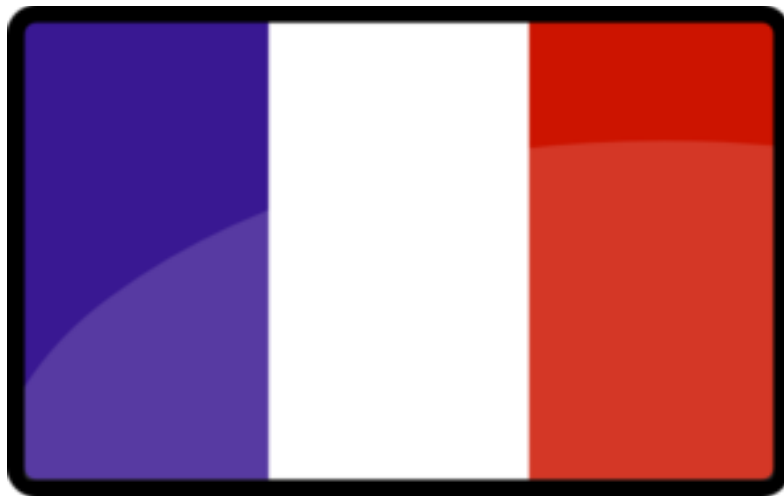


# ***DU Study Abroad Guide to France***

**2020-21**

Please use this booklet in conjunction with the  
[\*DU Study Abroad Handbook 2020-2021\*](#)



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## University of Denver Programs in France

Congratulations! You have been accepted to participate in a University of Denver program at one of the following study abroad programs in France:

- IAU in Aix-en-Provence (Humanities, French Honors Language, and Marchutz Art)
- API University of Caen (French Language and Culture in Normandy)
- Sciences Po Rennes
- ISA Catholic University Paris (French Language and Liberal Arts)
- IFE French Field Study and Internship Programs – Paris, Strasbourg (and Brussels)
- USAC University of Lyon (French Language and European Studies)

This handbook will provide you with a general overview of issues involved with traveling, living, and studying in France. Please use this in conjunction with our general Study Abroad Handbook.

We hope this handbook will assist you and your family in preparing for your time abroad. It is important that you carefully review the contents, as well as any information sent by your French program or university before you depart, and that you take it with you to France.

Studying abroad is an exciting opportunity. Nothing during your college years is likely to change you more. You will learn about another country and another culture and you will also learn to look at your own country from a different perspective. Most importantly, you will learn more about yourself. We encourage you to fully invest yourself into this experience. How much you gain from this opportunity will depend on your preparedness, flexibility, and responsibility. Review the general pre-departure information we provided you with; complete the administrative and academic matters that need to be taken care of before you leave; research the country and city you will be visiting; and review some of the suggested readings in our Study Abroad Handbook about what it means to go abroad.

Remember, you are there to complete an academic program successfully, just as if you were at DU. Good time management and goal setting are keys to handling a challenging academic program and becoming familiar with life outside the classroom. Most of all, we want you to have a great experience and make the most of this opportunity. When you return, be ready to share your stories with other students—your personal experience will be the best source of inspiration for others.

Safe Travels,  
*The Office of International Education (OIE)*

## Important Visa Information:

See the DU Passport [Immigration section for France](#) for complete French visa instructions. Or, contact your program directly.

Please note that the French visa process involves a lot of steps and usually takes 2-3 months to organize. You are required to make a personal visit to a French Visa Application Center for biometrics at an appointed time. Extensive travel, particularly international travel, over the summer or before your program is not recommended.

## You Made It!

### From the Airport to your Program Site

Your host institution will send you instructions as to how to get from the airport to your housing. They might arrange for you to be picked up, or you might be required to find your own mode of transportation to your new home. Either way, you should know where you're going and how you're getting there before you leave. Keep in mind that for some programs, you have to check in at a certain time to receive your keys and be shown around – so plan ahead and arrive during the designated days/hours. Email your program to find out if there is a special airport pick up.

- ✓ **Remember to take advantage of France's [public transportation system](#). Although you may be tempted to take a taxi, a taxi ride could prove to be very expensive. Research the options that may be available to you before you get to France.**

### You Walk in the Door...

Depending on your living situation, you may or may not be provided with living “essentials” such as bedding, dishes, pots and pans, etc. If this is your situation, you might want to take sheets and some eating necessities—a plate, bowl, silverware—however, you can also buy these things abroad, which might be easier. Ask your program what is included and what you should budget for.

- ✓ **From experience: Take advantage of the French people that you are living with, be they neighbors, roommates, or your host family. All of these people provide an excellent opportunity for you to be immersed in the French culture.**

**“Read in French, watch French TV and movies--don't just settle for the comfortable. Step outside of your comfort zone...”** - DU student in France

### Orientation and Welcome Weeks

All DU Partner Programs and most Unaffiliated Programs offer an Orientation, and you are required to attend. These programs vary from university to university, but are incredibly helpful. Information about orientation will be located in the acceptance materials you receive from the host institution. Orientations are specifically designed to help you with the initial adjustment to living in France, especially your host city, and what to expect from your university. They are generally full of events

and activities which are a fantastic way to meet new people, make friends, and get to know important information regarding your new home and university.

## Academics in France

### Academic Culture: Studying in France vs. Studying in the USA

There are major differences between the French and US academic systems. Overall, the academic system in France focuses on independence and critical thinking and judgment. There is far less structure than here at DU, which means that you will need to take the initiative to do well. Make sure you are on top of your registration process, that you attend and engage in classes, and ask questions of your professors when you need to. Sometimes in France the professors are less accessible than at DU so it takes an extra effort on your part. Usually in the French system a final exam or a paper is the most important part of your grade, versus the continuous assessment model of the USA. As a result, you should put your best work into this final assessment. The grading on your final exam may be far stricter than you have experienced at DU. Once you arrive, review the syllabus to understand the assessment model for each course. Set deadlines or goals for yourself and meet them.

Some of you will be attending a university alongside of French students. Some of you will be in a middle zone of attending classes with international students. Others will be entirely with U.S. students in a U.S. model. For those of you particularly in the first two categories, it is important to understand the cultural differences of the French educational system. The typical undergraduate program at a French university lasts three years (called License) and includes much more academic specialization than is usual in American colleges and universities. French students generally enter university to exclusively study their major, as there is not a “general studies” requirement as at most US four-year institutions. Additionally, the course requirements for those three years are more rigidly planned than at American institutions—there are few if any “elective” courses, and even Year 1 students have a stronger background in their field than what is typically expected in the US. Professors will also often reference other courses that they know degree-seeking students have already taken. This may take some time to recognize and will require flexibility and being unafraid to ask questions if you feel lost in the conversation.

### Preparing for Coursework Before Going to France

Particularly if you will be taking content or language courses in French, the OIE advises that you spend the summer listening to French radio, reading French newspapers, and watching French movies. This will accustom your ear to the language so you will feel more confident upon arrival. Also, if you are in the IFE program, we advise students to skim a few “memoires” or “thesis papers” in French, so you learn about the academic structure and citation methods of such papers.

## Teaching Style

In France the teaching style tends to be more lecture-based versus interactive. Additionally, French faculty members tend to be stricter and less touchy-feely than US faculty members. This different style can be perceived as “rude” by US students, but remember that it is a cultural difference. If you are in a French language learning program, be prepared for more hours of language instruction in the classroom.

## Course Selection and Registration

For direct enroll courses at Sciences Po, classes are organized into Year 1, 2, and 3. If you are at Caen, Lyon, and Aix-en-Provence and have the opportunity to take classes directly with French students, this applies, too.

### Year 1: DU Sophomore/Junior Level

- These courses, though Year 1, will still presume some background in the subject. You should look at these courses if considering elective credit or an area of study in which you do not have an extensive background. Even credits towards a major or minor can be found at this level depending on your background and expertise. If you do not have a strong background, be prepared to work hard to form the same understanding of the subject as Year 1 students.

### Year 2: DU Junior/Senior Level

- These courses assume a high level of prior knowledge. Often, these have important pre-requisites that you should make sure are present on your transcript before selecting the course.

### Year 3: DU Senior/Graduate Level

- These are “Senior Year” courses and assume a strong background in the subject. Keep in mind Year 3 students have studied only this topic for the last 2 years, so you should have substantial background before considering these courses.

Generally, we recommend that students stick with Year 1 (semesters 1& 2) and Year 2 (semesters 3 & 4) courses, making sure that they meet all pre-requisites ahead of time or onsite. Year 3 courses can be considered by students with substantial background in the subject, typically those studying abroad their senior year and looking for a course within their major.

As part of your host university application, you are asked to select the courses you would like to take. The host institution processes these requests by speaking with each relevant department, who then consider your transcript and decide whether you are qualified for the course. This decision lies with the department, not with the OIE or with the host university’s international office. Make sure you have selected courses open to international students that you are qualified for and have a handful of pre-approved back-up courses in mind.

Final registration does not take place until you arrive in country, so keep in mind last minute course cancellations or changes may still take place. Make sure you have vetted some additional pre-approved courses in case you need to register for a different class than you anticipated.

If you need major, minor or common curriculum credit, please use the [TIERS](#) system. You should have back-up courses ready when you register in case you don't get your first choice of classes. You may also use the [TIERS](#) system once you are abroad. Remember that you do not need to do the TIERS approval system for any course that you would like to come back to DU as elective credit.

## Grade and Credit Transfer

The French education system does not suffer from the same grade inflation that has become a problem in the US. Most French professors are accustomed to awarding “C” level grades to the average hard-working student, reserving “A” grades for rare and extraordinary students. *DU takes these cultural grading differences in mind.* To figure out how your French grades translate to DU grades, please refer to the [Global Grades and Credit Scale](#) created by the OIE. This information was provided by each institution. However, please note these are subject to change and are updated yearly.

Also, read the Credit section under the “Study Abroad Policies” section of your general orientation handbook. French universities award credits called “ECTS” that are each worth 0.8 DU credit hours. That means that a course taken for 4 ECTS credits would transfer back as 3.2 credits at DU. If your credits are calculated on a U.S. semester system (through IAU, ISA, USAC for example), each credit you earn abroad is worth 1.5 DU credits.

Keep in mind that some departments at DU limit the amount of credit that you can transfer back for your major from abroad. Speak with your major faculty advisor about any credit restrictions that exist.

## Course Load & Credits

Your course load and credits will vary depending on your program. You must enroll for at least the minimum number of credits to remain a full-time student at your host university and at DU. Dropping below this number will put you in violation of your visa status and may result in your deportation. Refer to the Study Abroad Policies on our website for information on the maximum number of credits you can transfer.

**You must retain full-time student status as defined by your host university or program.** If you fall below full-time status, you no longer qualify for a student visa and are in the country illegally.

You may find that your program offers courses that are worth as many as 16 DU credits. Having this many credits in one area may cause problems for making significant progress on your graduation requirements while abroad. Some majors limit the amount of credit that you can take within your major while abroad. We strongly recommend that you speak with your faculty advisor prior to your study abroad about any credit restriction that may exist on abroad courses or credit maximums in your major.

## Exams

For those of you doing a semester Sciences Po, you will need to arrange to take your exams early. Typically, the French university calendar begins in late September and ends in January or February. **It is your responsibility to ask permission from your professors at the beginning of the term to take an early exam so you can be home by the end of December.** Your OIE advisor can serve as your proctor in January, but you are responsible for making all arrangements. Ask your host university’s international office for help in this process. It is the host university’s and professor’s prerogative whether to allow exams/final papers to be sent electronically. Therefore, it is your responsibility to understand and organize how to complete your final assessment(s) well in advance.



Unless you are a year-long student, do not plan on remaining in France until January or return to France for an exam. This can violate your immigration status and would lead to missing a portion of DU Winter Quarter.

You must finish all of your coursework before leaving France. The final assessment will be worth the vast majority of your grade. Be sure that you give the assessment, whether it is a test or a paper, your absolute best effort. Save all of your coursework and material and bring it home with you.

### **What Your Grade Report Will Look Like**

When you return to DU, the general 16-credit study abroad placeholder course will remain on your grade report until the OIE has received your host university's transcript. It generally takes a few months for the transcript to arrive. Therefore, your actual credits and classes that you took abroad will not be visible on myWeb until a few months after you return.

Once the Registrar's Office receives your transcript, the office will use your course approvals to place your study abroad classes in the proper requirements for graduation. If a DU faculty advisor never approved one of your courses, the course will be placed in a general elective category by default.

- ✓ **If you are planning to graduate at the end of winter or spring quarter, it is important to let us know so that we can arrange for rushed delivery, if possible.**

## Program Support

Each program in France has a different level of local support. In general, French students do not expect the same amount of support as U.S. students. Each program will have a main point of contact to help with questions. You should be prepared to be persistent, but polite and patient whenever you need assistance.

You will have access to the international office at your host university, which is your main contact on campus for everything from class registration to housing to advise on the nearest grocery store. These offices have international advisors available to help answer your questions as you learn to navigate the French system and university life. They will provide you with resources both over the summer and when you arrive (including a 24-hour emergency number) and organize your mandatory orientation session—which can last anywhere from one day to one week.

While this office is here to help answer any question you have, they will not check-up on you regularly. Some students have been frustrated with what they perceive as a lack of individual attention from these offices and the lack of clear communication. This frustration is often due to a cultural misunderstanding and ungrounded expectations about the level of service at public institutions abroad. The international office staff is there *if you need them* and will assume that you will contact them if you need help.

Take the initiative and make an appointment at their office if you need information. Most easy-to-answer questions will be laid-out in written material, which they will send to you over the summer and give to you during your orientation—read these materials thoroughly and keep them accessible. Before asking questions, check to see if the answer is already contained in your written material.

Once you are accepted to your program, please begin corresponding with your local contact whenever you have questions about the program, your host university, your host city, etc.

### Learning Differences and Accommodations

If you have special needs regarding assessment, such as reading assistance, or note taking assistance, please inform your OIE Advisor and DU's Disabilities Services Program. We encourage you to include this information in your program-specific application and/or before going abroad. Also, please let your OIE study abroad advisor know and we can help facilitate a conversation with our partner in France.

## Living the Life of a French Student

- ✓ **Everything is expensive in France and you need to budget accordingly. You don't want to run out of money halfway through your trip.**

## Accommodations

Some programs have a French dorm/residence option. Others have a homestay option. For many dorms/residences, the size of the rooms may be smaller than what you are accustomed to in the United States. In addition, the buildings may be much older than you are used to. Wi-Fi speeds in residences in France may not be as fast, and in some cases, not available in the room. Be comfortable going out to restaurants, libraries, or other free spaces if you would like faster Wi-Fi.

If you live with a host, you have a unique opportunity to experience authentic, daily French living. As a guest in someone else's home, you want to be courteous and respectful. Communicate your plans. For example, if you're going to miss a meal or will be travelling over the weekend, let them know. Cultural misunderstandings are to be expected, but do all that you can to reduce them by asking questions, observing the way your host lives and organizes their lives, and joining in whenever possible. The more you engage with your host, the more you will benefit from the experience. You can sit down with your host at the beginning of your time abroad and talk about your expectations for the experience together. That way, you start out with the same understanding.

## France and Alcohol

Please see the Alcohol section of the Study Abroad Handbook.

## Transportation

Public transportation in France and throughout Europe is much better than what we are used to here in Denver. You will probably come to rely on public transportation, and will spend more time and money commuting than you are used to. All programs in France have a lengthy commute, and can be up to an hour one way. There will be an adjustment period to the new lifestyle, but most students come back from France with a newfound appreciation for public transport (not to mention an aversion to driving).

You should also be prepared to walk—a lot! Bring comfortable shoes and learn to enjoy the daily exercise and exposure to the sights and sounds of your new city.

As for travelling within France, the train is your best option. SNCF is the train company and their website is [www.sncf.fr](http://www.sncf.fr). It is originally in French, but you can change the language in the top right under “Langue: Fr”. You can either book your trains online, at the train station, or at a SNCF boutique around town. It is recommended that you get a 12-25 card (*une carte douze-vingt-cinq*). This card will get you discounts on all of your train travel and it pays for itself mostly within the first round trip. French trains are wonderful. The TGV (*train à grande vitesse*) is a high speed train that runs all over France, and there are other regional trains that travel shorter distances.

## Electrical Appliances

France and Europe have different electrical outlets than we do with different voltages, so you will need to take with you an adaptor and/or transformer/converter. Adaptors change the size and style of the plug and transformers change the voltage. The good news is that

most computers and phone chargers are now equipped to convert the voltage and you might just need a way to plug it in. Conversion plugs can be easily purchased in the States before you travel to France. Or, you can purchase them in France.

Computers: Back up everything before you go abroad. Losing everything in a computer crash is devastating, and you want to make sure you're prepared for the worst. Also, when in France, everything is not wireless as it is for the most part here on campus. Take an Ethernet cable, or you can buy one there if you need to.

- ✓ **From experience: "If you don't back up all of your computer files anyway, do it before you leave. Traveling is hard on your computer, and it may be hard to get it fixed if it crashes or if files are lost. My computer broke down about a month into my time here. Luckily everything worked out, but be prepared for the worst. Plus, there is no tech centre on campus!" - DU student**

### Cell Phones

You will need to check with your U.S. mobile carrier to see if you can use your phone while abroad. In addition, when in France, you may find it very handy to have "*un portable*" – a local cell phone. Many students use their existing unlocked phone and simply purchase a French SIM and a "pay as you go" plan from a provider (Orange, SFR, and Bouygues). You can buy credit as often as you need to, and it can come in amounts ranging from 5 Euros to 30 Euros, but remember that it can add up quickly.

### Calling to and from France

The calling code for France is +33 and phone numbers are 10 digits long. Most cell phone numbers will start 06.xx.xx.xx.xx. When calling anyone in France with a French phone, you will enter the number exactly as you see it. When you are calling from France back to the States, you will enter 001 + (U.S. area code) number. However, when you need to call from a French phone outside the country, you will enter 00 + calling code + number. If the number has a 0 in front, the 0 is left off.

France to France = 04.xx.xx.xx.xx

France to States = 001 xxx.xxx.xxxx

France to Austria = 0043 xxx.xxx.xxxx

If your parents or anyone ever wants to call you, they enter 011+33+your number (remember if it starts with a 0, leave it off!)

## Homesickness and Mental Health

Moving abroad and living in a country that probably doesn't speak your native language is hard, but it's an adventure. It will be difficult adjusting and immersing yourself in this new culture, but embrace it as much as you can. Use each and every experience to speak French and learn more about where you are. If you don't, you will come home wishing that you had. Yes, it's scary and difficult, but each time you try, you will improve that much more. It

will be exhausting, and sometimes your brain will hurt, but keep in mind that speaking as much French as you can every day will make you that much more fluent than everyone else that chooses to speak English. And it will get easier. You'll even find yourself using phrases and verb tenses that you never understood in class without even thinking about it. You may even start dreaming in French. Don't give up.

Also, the weather in France will probably be very different from what you are used to here in Denver, especially if you are in northern France. Be prepared for more rain and cloudy days. Keep in mind that weather can affect your mood, but knowing what to expect will help you deal with that change.

If you are seeing a therapist in the U.S., you may want to look into the possibility of seeing one in France as well. Use your program and/or International SOS as resources to help you find a therapist locally. Culture shock and homesickness tend to exacerbate depression, anxiety, and other emotional and physiological concerns. Even if you're not used to meeting with a therapist you may want to consider doing so while you are abroad. Be willing to verbalize the changes and adjustments you are going through to make your study abroad experience as positive and stress-free as possible.

As for dealing with homesickness, remember that everyone experiences it at one point or another and to varying degrees. There are multiple ways to deal with it, too. You can either try to view everything that is different as a new experience, or you can find something that reminds you of home and connect with that, or sometimes calling home helps. Once you've found a way of dealing with it, it is easier to get over it and enjoy abroad! Just despite how bad it might seem, and how much you might want to come home, always remember that homesickness does go away, so just give it time.

## Packing Tips from France Study Abroad Alums

### Things to Take

- Warm clothes and sweaters for layering
- Lots of black and neutral clothes- The French tend to dress more formally than US students do in the classroom. (Read: no PJ's in the classroom.)
- An umbrella and rain coat
- Boots. Great for rain, going out, and looking French
- You DO NOT need to weigh down your pack with toiletries, unless you have specific products or brands that you prefer (i.e. contact solution, feminine products, etc.) You can get everything you need in France (although it's not a bad idea to bring travel-size items).
- Nicer clothes for going out at night.
- Don't bother bringing school supplies. You can get it all in France as well.
- You can purchase most linens in France, but if you need 1000 count sheets, you may want to bring them along.
- Less is usually better.

- A couple photos or wall hangings from home... another great way to avoid homesickness

### Things You Might Want to Leave at Home

- Flip-flops. Wearing them in the summer is totally acceptable, but wearing them every day starts to scream American.
- Sweatpants. If you do bring them, be aware that the French will immediately know you're American if you step outside wearing them.
- Many of your toiletries. You can purchase similar items in France.

### Other Packing Suggestions

- Think about bringing some extra clothes in your carry-on in case your checked luggage gets lost.
- Bring a backpack for weekend travel – many European airlines will charge you extra for a roller carry-on
- Bringing clothes that can easily mix and match will help give you different outfit options without packing too many clothes