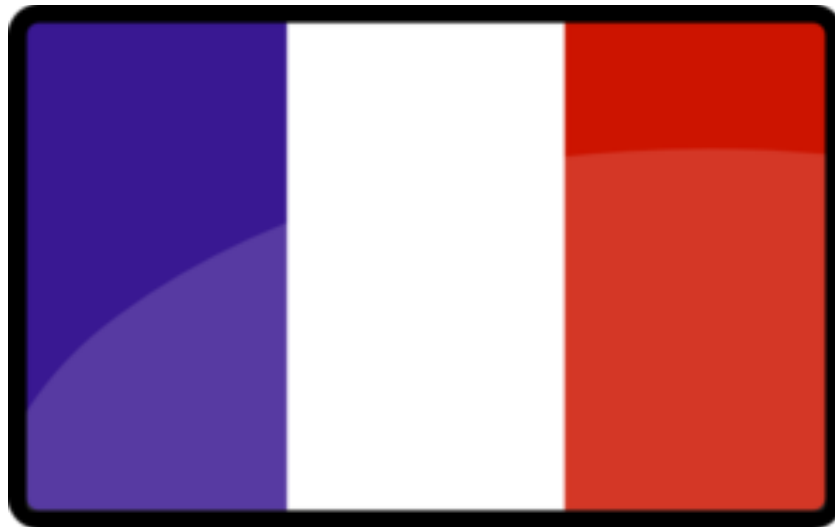


# COUNTRY GUIDE

## FRANCE 24-25



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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, Social Sciences, Business, International Relations, French Honors Language, and Marchutz Art)
- 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 what to expect when it comes to studying, living, and traveling in France. Please use this in conjunction with our general Study Abroad Handbook. We hope the 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.

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 in 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; and research the country and city you will be visiting.

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)*

## Immigration

The immigration information for students traveling to France can be found on [DU Passport](#). Please see <https://france-visas.gouv.fr/en/student> for more details.

If your program is over 90 days (about 3 months), you must have a student visa to study in France. 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 VFS Global visa center for biometrics at an appointed time. For that reason, we advise that you hold off any extensive travel plans over the summer, so as not to impede your student visa process.

## 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 must check in at a certain time to receive your keys and be shown around – so plan 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 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 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 sent to you 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**

### **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.

## **University Experience**

### **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.

Professors will likely provide a list of 30-50 selected books. How many of the listed works should you actually read? It depends on a variety of decisions that you need to make for yourself. Consider how much you already know about the subject, what you are interested in, and how much you want to learn about the material. You may not find all references equally helpful or written in a style that you can digest. And don’t hesitate to ask your professor to help you identify the works that would be the most helpful to you, reminding them that French is not your first language and that the reading may take you a \*bit\* longer than it would a native speaker. In other words, you should make an informed decision on what to include or exclude from your personal reading schedule. Some students (French or foreign) choose to do the minimum. This could result in passing with a low grade or failing the course.

## Outside the Classroom

Courses meet once or twice a week, for 1½ to 3, sometimes even 4-hour periods, and French students spend more time in the classroom than students at U.S. institutions (except science students in the U.S.). Undergraduate students in France have a 20 to 30-hour course load per week.

Professors may not distribute a syllabus, handouts, or an assignment schedule for their course. A lack of American-style syllabi and reading assignments does not indicate that there is not independent work to do for the class. Professors assume that students will do large amounts of research and reading outside of class. To them, telling their students what and when to read is insulting to their intelligence as adults. Professors usually provide extensive bibliographies and expect students to work “judiciously”. While students are not expected to read all the books that are listed in a bibliography, at the end of the course, on the final exam, they will be expected to address a question by presenting a broad and conceptual “réflexion” on the lectures and their independent readings.

## Class Levels and Course Selection

For direct enroll courses at Sciences Po, classes are organized into Year 1, 2, and 3. If you are at 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 in 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.

## Registration

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 as long as there is a corresponding department at DU.

## Academic Terminology

In French universities, instructors and researchers give students two types of classes:

1. cours magistraux (lectures): a professor presents a subject to students in an amphitheater for 100 to over 1,000 people. These non-mandatory classes are often written up and handed out by the instructors to students in the form of pamphlets, which can prove very handy when it comes time to revise for exams at the end of the semester;
2. travaux dirigés (TD - tutorials) and travaux pratiques (TP- practical or lab work): these mandatory classes are for smaller groups and are a complement to the lectures, with the intention of applying and deepening theoretical understanding. Company internships may also be required in addition to the tutorials and practical work.

The French university system has its own rhetoric and codes that students need to learn. It includes acquiring a new vocabulary, way of thinking, and work style. There are academic exercises that every student in a French university is expected to understand and perform adequately as a minimum. Examples of these academic exercises are:

la dissertation (a French-style essay)

le commentaire composé (another French-style paper most commonly used in literature classes)

l'exposé oral (an oral presentation/report)

le dossier (a research paper)

la fiche de lecture (a reading report)

un devoir sur table (in-class paper or test)

## Assessment (Grading)

The French grading system is on a scale from 0-20. To pass a subject, you usually need 10 points. A student is considered to have passed if at the end of each academic year the average of his/her grades is at least 10. French universities grade in a stricter way than secondary schools, meaning that students are unlikely to get grades as high as they did in secondary school.

A score of 20 signifies perfection and is virtually never given. Scores of 19 and 18 are rarely given. Depending on the subject, a 16 could be an excellent grade. But also, in some circumstances a 12 could also be considered an excellent grade.

There is no exact formula for converting scores between the French 0–20 scale and American grades, and there are several reasons why the French and the American systems are not entirely

equivalent. Some American institutions use weighted grades, where grades for advanced classes are added in the official transcripts to compensate for the difficulty of the classes. French institutions do not use them, the result being that in a university, scores over 12 indicate that the student is in the top 10–20% of the class, grades over 14 are extremely rare, and perfect 20s are almost never given. Although the American grading system may be more “lenient” than the French one, the advantage for French education is that it’s much cheaper than the American one. Read our article about how much French Universities tuition fees cost approximately.

## 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 universities 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 your coursework before leaving France. The final assessment will be worth most of your grade. Be sure that you give the assessment, whether it is a test or a paper, your absolute best effort. Save all 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 the Registrar know so that we can arrange for rushed delivery, if possible.**

## Learning Differences & Accommodations

If you are eligible for academic accommodations through the DU Student Disability Services, we recommend you talk to your host university and OIE advisor immediately. Get started now. We encourage you to include this information in your program-specific application and/or before going abroad. There are multiple steps to set up accommodation, incl. sharing documentation. Waiting until after your program starts to disclose may result in you not receiving the accommodations you need. Informing your OIE study abroad advisor in advance would help facilitate a conversation with our partner in France.

## Living in France

### 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 are 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.

## 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.

## 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 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 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!)

## Additional Costs

Programs or university housing may require students to pay extra for internet, fitness center access; laundry; other services; going out. Early arrival sessions, specific program tracks (such as Fine Arts), or optional excursions may have additional costs. These will not be covered by DU and instead will be billed to students directly who opt-in to those experiences.

At Sciences Po Rennes, for example, other than housing rent, deposits, meals, etc. There are also Start-up costs (i.e. bedding, linens, kitchenware)

At the IAU College, additional costs may include the following

- Local transportation
- Optional excursions

- Class lab fees: art courses can have additional fees of ~\$250
- Books and supplies: expect ~\$50 per course for book/media fees

### **Food costs:**

Food prices have gone up around the world since 2021. Between 2021 and 2022, food and non-alcoholic beverage prices there increased by more than five percent, though France was one of just six European Union countries whose prices went up by less than ten percent. Fortunately for lovers of French wine, alcoholic beverages kept their price increases to under five percent.

What do those figures translate to in real life? Milk costs between \$4 and \$5 per gallon. You can buy a dozen eggs for \$3.65 to \$4.50. Want to try making coq au vin? A pound of chicken sells for \$5.60 to \$6.90. Delicious local cheeses are \$7.30 to \$9 per pound. Potatoes go for about a dollar per pound, while apples are \$1.20 to \$1.50 per pound.

If you prefer to enjoy your French cuisine at an inexpensive local bistro, you'll pay between \$14.50 and \$18 for a meal. A three-course meal for two will cost between \$59 and \$72. If you'd like to make it a night out and go to the movies, a pair of tickets will be \$23.50 to \$29. Getting popcorn, whether you prefer it "sucré" (sugar-coated) or "salé" (with salt), will cost extra.

### **Transportation Costs:**

Local transportation options include metro and bus systems. A one-way ticket for these systems will cost between \$1.75 and \$2.20, or you can get a monthly transit pass for \$73 to \$90.

## **Meeting Locals**

### **1. Mind your manners.**

Politeness goes a long way and is an expected part of French culture. When entering a shop or establishment, one makes eye contact with the employee(s) and offers a greeting - "Bonjour" (Good day) or "Bonsoir" (Good evening) depending on the time of day. When leaving, even if one does not purchase anything, one always looks at the shopkeeper and offers a "Merci, au revoir" or just a simple "Au revoir" before leaving. The two phrases to learn (and are important to know in the language of any country you visit) are the golden words your mother once taught and emphasized: s'il vous plaît (please) and merci (thank you). Don't leave your manners at home!

### **2. First names are for friends.**

When I was growing up, I never would address one of my parents' friends by his or her first name. (In fact, it probably took me a while to realize that they had first names like me.) It was a sign of respect. And here in France, there is a certain formality in place to show respect to others. This

means you can give add on a "Madame" or "Monsieur" when greeting people, but no first names with strangers.

### 3. Give a little warning before unleashing the rush of English.

If someone came up to you in your home country and started speaking French quickly (and under the assumption you understood), you not only would be confused but might also be put-off and irritated. So even if you don't know any French, invest in trying to remember this short question: "Parlez-vous anglais?" Asking someone if they speak English will help prepare them to switch over to English if they know it. And if not, you can proceed with some English and charades anyway and hopefully meet halfway - but at least they are more ready to face the language barrier.

### 4. Louder only helps sounds barriers, not language barriers.

Many times, people who encounter someone who is not fluent in English try to communicate by repeating what they said much louder. The problem is not one of hearing, but of understanding. Speaking slower, using body language, and trying to rephrase what you are trying to communicate into simpler thoughts is more likely to help the situation.

### Point that will transcend countries:

1. **Stick around.** While you may be tempted to head out every weekend to travel around the country, doing so will greatly impede your chances of making friendships with local students. Constantly talking about your travel, particularly about expensive excursions, will also turn off the local students, who typically will not have as much spending money as an American study abroad student.
2. **Be respectful.** Compare and contrast gets old fast. Talking non-stop about your personal belongings, including cars and other expensive items in the US, will merely reinforce stereotypes about Americans and prevent you from getting to know local students.
3. **Know your politics.** Most likely you will be asked by locals about your political stance. Questions about your political views generally will be well-intentioned and made by people genuinely interested in hearing your perspective. Be careful not to get offended or defensive when these questions arise. Also, try not to compare governments. Your best move is to remain open-minded in political discussions.
4. **Know the local culture and history.** Do some research about the local area and listen to how people identify themselves before making assumptions. Don't be afraid to ask respectful questions.

## Health & Safety Abroad

### Medical Facilities

There are over 20,000 pharmacies (Pharmacie) across France – which is double the number in the UK. Pharmacies are identifiable by a large green cross. Upon presenting your prescription at a pharmacy, you need to pay a portion of the cost of the medicine – this varies based on the medication and insurance coverage. The amount reimbursed is contingent on the type of medication prescribed and may range from 15% to 100%. Pharmacies in larger towns and shopping centers typically operate from Monday to Saturday, between 8:30 AM and 7:30 PM. But, in smaller towns, pharmacies often close for lunch between 12:00 PM and 2:00 PM. Typically, one pharmacy in the area remains open on Sundays and after-hours. You can easily locate the duty pharmacy by checking the window of other pharmacies, consulting the local newspaper, or calling 3237.

In France, numerous healthcare professionals such as doctors and dentists operate in health centers known as “centres de sante” throughout the country. These centers, which number about 1,600, are mostly located in urban areas. When you see a specialist, they are likely to work at a “centres de sante.” To locate a center close to you, you can visit the National Federation of Health Centers (Federation Nationale des Centres de Sante) website. Additionally, there are Family Planning Centers (centres de planification et d’éducation familial) that offer services such as birth control, parenting sessions, sexual health advice, and abortions. To learn more about the services offered in your region and to find a center nearby, you can visit the Planning Familial website.

### Pre-departure Health & Safety Checklist

☐ Call [DU’s Travel Assistance Provider](#) to talk about...

- Any health, wellness, safety, and security concerns
- Required/recommended vaccinations and prophylaxis
- Current medications
- On-going health concerns: physical, mental, & emotional (including addictions)
- Doctors/hospitals recommendations near your study abroad location

☐ Consult with your OIE advisor with any concerns you may have about going abroad.

### Health & Wellness

☐ Complete any health information forms requested by your program.

☐ Ask your program if they provide health insurance abroad and, if so, what steps you must take to opt-in.

☐ Understand the travel medical insurance provided by DU and assess if it will meet your needs. If not, arrange for adequate international health insurance. Know how to use your health insurance plan(s) in case you need to use it abroad. Know how you will pay if your insurance plan is reimbursement-based abroad.

☐ Get a check-up with relevant healthcare providers. DU's [Health & Counseling Center \(HCC\)](#) can provide several of these services.

- General physical exam
  - Dental check-up
  - Optical check-up
  - Counselor or psychiatrist
  - Gynecological visit (for females)

☐ Visit the [CDC website](#) to read about health risks in the regions where you'll travel. Get vaccinations for all regions you plan to visit. (Remember to allow six months for Hepatitis B vaccinations). DU's [HCC](#) provides vaccinations at a reasonable rate.

☐ Secure a supply of all prescription medication for your entire trip or figure out how you will procure your prescription medication abroad. Get a copy of the prescription in case you are questioned at customs or at airport security.

☐ Assemble a customized travel health kit, packing prescription & over-the-counter medications for the duration of your stay abroad. Remember to pack a few weeks of supplies in your carry on so you're prepared in case your checked bags are lost in transit.

☐ If you require any accommodation for a disability during your study abroad program, contact the DU Office of International Education or the DU Student Disability Services, as well as your program abroad. (Additional paperwork may be needed.)

In France, care is almost free, but medical insurance does not fully cover visits to health service providers. To obtain full reimbursement, students may elect to enroll in a supplemental health plan offered by a general or student mutual (group) insurer, a conventional insurance company, or a bank.

## Health Insurance

France has an integrated network of public and private services, including doctors, hospitals, and specialist providers

Studying in France can be very exciting, but along with that excitement comes the daunting task of guaranteeing that you have sufficient cover in place for your health. Private Student Health insurance in France furnishes strong defense in countries that do not have a free health service or where you'd prefer to enjoy the benefits of going private. Insurance in France covers your health, travel, and stay. It is quick and easy and the best investment for students. All international students studying in France are required to be covered by health insurance, either public or private. International students are eligible to participate in France's universal health care coverage. However, this depends on factors such as age, country of origin, and degree program length. To be qualified for France's national health insurance plan, you must meet the following requirements:

Under the age of 28 by October 1st of the current University year

Enrolled in a degree program for 4 months or longer

Have a home country that is outside of the European Union or Switzerland

The minimum requirement of Health Insurance for non-European students studying in France is that insurance must cover stays of less than 90 days; Schengen visas require insurance coverage valid in France of at least €37,500.

### Emergency Number

112 is one of the emergency numbers in France. Other national emergency numbers are:

15 - medical emergency

17 - police

18 - fire brigade

115 - social emergency

119 - abused children

116000 - missing children

114 - National Centre for emergency calls for users with disabilities

### Crime

Be cautious and aware of your surroundings, like you would be in Denver. Pay attention to your belongings, especially in crowded tourist sites and on public transportation. Be mindful of any scams targeted at tourists.

Most crimes directed against foreign visitors, including U.S. citizens, involve pickpocketing, residential break-ins, bicycle theft, and other forms of theft with minimal violence. However, as in any big city, robberies involving physical assault do occur in Paris and other major urban areas. Visitors to congested areas and known tourist sites (e.g., museums, monuments, train stations, airports, and subways) should be particularly attentive to their surroundings. Crimes against visitors are generally crimes of opportunity, though these crimes are more likely to involve violence on the street late at night or when the victim detects the theft and resists the criminal. As in any major city, one should exercise extra caution when out alone at night and/or consider traveling out at night with companions. In general, Paris taxis are safe and professionally operated, but there has been an increase in reported harassment and assaults on women by taxi drivers.

Caution is required throughout France when driving through economically depressed areas where there is a high incidence of “smash and grab” robberies. Thieves will approach a vehicle that is stopped in traffic, smash a window, reach into the vehicle to grab a purse or other valuable item, and then flee. Keep doors locked and valuables out of sight.

## Natural Disasters

It is highly recommended that US Citizens register under the [Smart Traveller Enrollment Program](#) under the State Department. The STEP helps US citizens and nationals:

- Receive important information from the Embassy about safety conditions in your destination country, helping you make informed decisions about your travel plans.
- Help the U.S. Embassy contact you in an emergency, whether natural disaster, civil unrest, or family emergency.
- Help family and friends get in touch with you in an emergency.

## Communication

### Time Differences

France is 8 hours ahead of Denver.

### Calling Home

Social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Zoom or FaceTime provide good internet-based alternatives for calling home.

## Mobile Phones & SIM Cards

The mobile sector in France is competitive, with an ever-increasingly number of French cell phone companies in the market. For new arrivals, this means there are plenty of choices, with operators offering good value-for-money deals. Because of this, it pays to shop around. It's also a good idea to think about your other connections, such as home internet and TV, to see if you can save by combining the contracts.

Mobile operators in France include the following:

1. Bouygues Télécom
2. Coriolis
3. La Poste Mobile
4. Lebara Mobile
5. Lycamobile
6. Orange
7. Prixtel
8. Réglo Mobile
9. SFR

In terms of subscribers, Orange is the largest and most popular mobile operator in France, with over 30% market share. SFR is the second-largest French operator (with around 30%), ahead of Bouygues Télécom and Free Mobile; both of which have around 15% of the market. These four networks are often best in terms of coverage. They also all offer home internet and TV services that can be packaged up with a mobile phone subscription.

## Email

You may get an email address from your host program or university. Make sure that you check both this and your DU account (or have them forward to an address you do check), as both universities will send you important communications throughout your time abroad.

## Social Media

Legal aspects regarding the use of the Internet are very detailed and restrictive. The Employment Law Review (2012) in France suggests that information found on social media sites could be used by employers for checking an individual's background and could also be used as evidence for dismissal.

Similar to other European countries, the patterns of use of social networks is different amongst French SMEs and students where networks such as Twitter and LinkedIn are preferred by

business audiences and Facebook and Skyrock by students. Twitter is well represented in France by the over 55s and played a major part in the 2012 French presidential elections.

## Money

### Local Currency

Euro is the official currency in France. Students should change their currency either before they leave or after they arrive, but not do so at an airport because commission fees are normally higher there than in other parts of France.

### Bank Accounts

Most students do not open bank accounts. Rather, they use ATMs, local currency, and/or credit cards.

However, It can be handy to get a bank account in France, for paying bills (electricity, telephone, rent) and subscriptions (transportation, Internet). Getting a bank account is a right recognised by French authorities. A foreign student can open a bank account in any bank in France. The different banks have branches in most cities; just open the door and make an appointment with a counsellor. Compare what the different banks offer. The costs of the bank card, international transfers and cash withdrawals abroad may vary noticeably from one bank to another.

Three documents are needed to open a bank account: identification, proof of residence and an attestation of enrolment or a student card. If you still don't have any accommodation, you may be able to use the address of the service of international relations of your institution. After you open a bank account, you will have the right to a bank card and a cheque book. With your Relevé d'Identité Bancaire (RIB - bank account information slip), you will be able to easily make the different monthly payments you have. Details of this process, documents to provide and associations offering help are available on the [Banque de France](#) website.

### ATM & Credit Cards

Credit and debit cards issued by major global providers like VISA and Mastercard are commonly accepted in touristy areas (although this is less the case in non-touristy regions). If your card is issued by American Express, Diner's Club, Discovery, or another card company, there's a good chance they'll also be accepted in France, but we recommend checking with your bank or card provider directly to make sure that euro currency conversion is indeed supported, and that card machines and ATMs in France commonly support cards of this type.

Contactless payment by card or by digital wallet (Apple pay, Google pay etc) is an option in most cases, though contactless card payments are limited to transactions not exceeding 50 Euros. ATMs (cashpoints) are widespread, and can be found outside virtually all banks, in many shopping centers or shopping malls, in main train stations, airports, conference centers, motorway service areas, and other places. Most French banks, including the Postal Bank (la Banque Postale), can be used for sending or receiving cash by wire transfer, for example by Western Union.

## General Information for Living Abroad

### Electricity & Infrastructure

If you're planning to charge or use your mobile phone, electric shaver, hair dryer, laptop, or other electrical device by plugging it into an electrical outlet and are traveling to Paris from the U.S., Canada, Australia, China, Japan, or any other country where electric plugs and outlets differ from those used in France, then yes, you will need a plug adapter.

Fortunately, adapters are cheap, light to carry, and easy to get while you're still in your home country. But don't wait to get one until you're in Paris or elsewhere in France, because the configuration you need - US-(or other country)-to-Paris adapter - can be tough to find. (But if you need a Paris-to-other-country adapter, no problem!)

Popular brands include Ceptics, Vintar, and Tessan.

### Weather

Metropolitan France has a temperate climate. It's neither too hot nor too cold, but the weather changes significantly with the seasons. Bring warm clothing as well as light clothing so you are ready for every season.

In the spring, from March to May, the weather is pleasant. There is mild temperature and sunshine to offset the frequent precipitation. In the summer, from June to September, it may be hot, especially in the South, but it rarely gets above 35 degrees Celsius.

From October to December, there are some beautiful days in the autumn, but it is often damp. Without being particularly hard, the winters are cold. Snow sometimes comes on the heels of rain and the temperature can dip into the negatives, especially in the mountains.

### Slang Terminology & Language Differences

Bonjour: a general greeting meaning “hello” or “good morning”

Au revoir: goodbye

Oui: yes

Non: no

Merci: thank you

Merci beaucoup: thank you very much

Fille: girl

Garçon: boy

Femme: woman

Homme: man

Amour: love

Français: French

S'il vous plaît: please (literally, "if you please")

Bonsoir: good evening

Bonne nuit: good night

Excusez-moi: excuse me

De rien: a casual way of saying "you're welcome"

Je vous en prie: a formal way to say "you're welcome"

Temps: time

Jour: day

Monde: world

Monsieur: mister or gentleman

Raison: reason

Mademoiselle: Miss, referring to an unmarried woman

Madame: a married or older woman

Beau: handsome

Belle: beautiful

Chat: cat

Chien: dog

Fort: strong

## Transportation Systems & Traffic Safety

France is famous for its effective network of public transport. It serves the whole country except some very remote rural areas. SNCF (Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français) is the state-owned company which runs most long-distance trains and other forms of inter-regional transport. Local transport in France is handled by various companies, including SNCF, who run buses and local trains. Larger cities are either served by their own underground subway systems (metros), trams or light-rail systems.

### **Metros, trams, and light-rail services**

In Paris, the métro runs approximately every 5 minutes and reaches almost every neighborhood of the capital. In addition to the métro, trams, and buses, Paris also has the RER (Réseau Express Régional). This express train connects the city of Paris to its suburbs.

France's larger cities are also served by metros. the following cities are served by metros:

Paris, Lyon, Lille, Marseille, Rennes, Toulouse

The following cities do not have a metro system but are served by either trams or light-rail systems:

Bordeaux, Caen, Clermont-Ferrand, Grenoble, Le Mans, Montpellier, Mulhouse, Nancy, Nice, Nantes, Orleans, Rouen, Saint-Etienne, Strasbourg, Valenciennes

### **France's urban bus services**

Buses charge a flat rate for individual trips which makes it easy to buy a ticket from the driver when you get on. Buses in France are very cheap, tickets are not normally more than a euro and are even as little as 20 cents in some places. Many cities have bus services which run into the suburbs or even into the countryside which can be a handy option for day trips.

Outside of the cities, bus services can be infrequent and slow. They are designed to get local children to school and service hospitals, not so useful for visitors.

### **Traveling by Train**

France's train network is extensive and comprehensive. Trains are run with precision and tickets are cheaper than most other European countries. The network includes suburban, regional, national, and international train lines. SNCF operate high-speed trains which are known as TGVs (Train à Grande Vitesse). Running at approximately 250 kph, they are the world's fastest trains. They link 50 French cities and cover 3,000 stations over 32,000km of track. TGVs are famous for their speed, comfort, and punctuality. Journey times are often quicker than flying when you take the waits and queues into account.

As well as linking most French regions, TGVs also run internationally. Eurostar links Paris with London and Thalys links the capital with Brussels and Amsterdam.

### **Buying train tickets**

You can buy all types of rail tickets at any SNCF station using any major credit or debit card. Cheap deals are available through numerous channels online. It's possible to find great deals if you book months in advance or last-minute. Rail passes are another way of getting a good deal. 'Rail Europe' and 'Eurail' are just 2 of the most popular rail pass providers. There are numerous options such as 5-day passes, regional passes, and others which even allow international travel, all for discounted prices.

## **Sustainability Abroad**

[CapaCITIES](#) is a support action for national and regional authorities to advance their governance structures and strengthen dedicated support for cities to achieve the climate-neutral Cities Mission. The project is funded under the EU Missions programme of Horizon Europe. CapaCITIES coordinates actions across climate neutral city initiatives in Europe in order to exploit synergies between them and align efforts towards the goals of the mission including city networks, the UAEU partnerships, the CoR, and others. The deployment of this initiative in France is steered by France Villes et territoires Durables, the French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the General Commissariat for Sustainable Development (CGDD), the French National Agency for the Cohesion of Territories (ANCT) and France Urbaine. The mission of France Villes et territoires Durables is to identify the obstacles and levers to the carbon transition of territories at national and local level, and to consider ways of facilitating the implementation of European objectives.

Check out our Sustainability Country Guides on our website:

<https://internationalization.du.edu/abroad/content/sustainability-abroad-study-abroad>.