



Families of France

Teacher's Guide

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Scripts

This is our village in Beaujolais, France. I live here with my mother and father and my grandmother. That's our farm down there. It's more than 400 years old.

See the big tree in our courtyard? Grandmother says my great, great, great, great, great grandfather went to America with Lafayette to help the Americans fight for independence from the British. He brought back a tiny sequoia tree and planted it in the courtyard. So it's more than 200 years old!

It's 7:30 when Dad wakes me up for school. My name's Camille and I'm 9 years old.

Mom, Dad and I live here in a building that used to be a barn before we fixed it up for our family. Our farm has several buildings built around a courtyard.

Visitors stay here in the guest house, which used to be the old farmhouse. Grandma has her apartment at the other end. Dad's making breakfast for us and some guests.

On our farm we grow grapes and make wine from them. Lots of people come to this area to see how wine is made, and we earn extra money by renting rooms to them.

On school days Mom and I often eat here, too. We usually have yogurt, bread and butter, jam and tea. Today I'm having my favorite raisin bread.

Dad's getting ready for an appointment he has today. He's trying to get laws changed so workers, like the people that help us on the farm, will get back more of the taxes they pay to the government. He used to be a lawyer, so he knows how to do that kind of thing.

Mom will drive her car to work in Lyon, which is about 30 minutes away. It only takes Dad and me about 5 minutes to get to my school. When I'm ten, I can ride the bus.

There are 30 kids in my class.

First we practice writing. We use fountain pens with liquid ink, so we have to dry the ink with blotting paper before it gets smeared.

Marie is doing a part from a book called *The Miser*, by Moliere. The man she's playing only loves money, and he's upset because he thinks someone's stolen it.

At 11:30 we have lunch, which is the main meal in France. Most businesses close for lunch between noon and 2:00 because we like to take our time when we eat, to relax and talk.

A nearby restaurant cooks our lunch and brings it to school. Today we're having fish, salad, spinach, yogurt, bread, and fresh fruit. For dessert we have a fruit tart, like a little pie. We have an hour for lunch and an hour to play before we start classes again this afternoon.

While I'm in school, Mom's at her job in Lyon. She schedules work for 150 people at an internet company and sends bills to customers telling them how much they have to pay.

She says France is a leader in advanced technologies, like our phone system, the Concorde airplane, and the world's fastest train, the TGV.

Dad's back, and he's telling our workers what happened at his meeting. He says it will take a long time to get the laws changed, but he's going to work on it.

It's winter, and this is the time to prune, or trim the grapevines. Some of our vines are over 100 years old!

We have 30,000 grapevines to prune before the plants start to grow again this spring.

The grapes grow all summer and are ready to pick, or harvest, in the fall.

We squeeze the juice from the grapes and store it in wooden barrels until it turns into wine. The wine we make here is called Beaujolais, like our area.

Wines taste different depending on lots of things, like the kind of grapes that were used, how long the juice stayed in the barrels, and what the weather was like when the grapes were growing. Dad decides when the wine's ready by smelling and tasting it. Dad says you need to swish the wine around in your mouth to get the full flavor.

When it's ready, we put it in bottles with our own labels. We heat the plastic shrink wrap around the top of the bottle to keep the cork clean and show whether or not the bottle's been opened. Then the wine's ready to send to stores.

When I get out of school at 4:30, I stay with Nanu and Panu. They take care of other children and me while our parents are at work. Nanu and Panu have taken care of me since I was a baby, so they seem like second set of parents to me. Most French mothers and fathers have jobs, and the government helps to pay for day care centers.

Panu built their house and most of their furniture himself. Sometimes he teaches me how to make things in his shop.

It's winter now, so it's dark by the time Mom picks me up from day care at about 7:30. We have dinner and relax for awhile before she helps me get ready for bed. I can stay up later than usual tonight, because tomorrow is Saturday, so I don't have to get up for school.

It's Saturday and I have a riding lesson. When we ride we wear special hard hats to protect our heads in case we fall. We're moving around on our horses to help us feel more relaxed. I just started riding lessons about 3 months ago. Here our horses are stepping over some logs. It's one of the first steps in learning how to jump.

Grandma's picking me up today. We're going to go to the boulangerie, or bakery, that makes my favorite raisin bread. The baker mixes flour, water and yeast into dough. After he kneads, or mixes, the dough, he lets it sit in a warm place so the yeast will form bubbles. It takes about 8 hours to mix the dough, let it rise and bake it in the oven.

When we get home, Grandma helps me with my homework. She thinks a good way to practice spelling and punctuation is by dictation. She reads from a book and I write down what she says. People here think it's important to speak and write French correctly. That's why our language has stayed the same for hundreds of years.

After homework, Dad and I go to the vineyard to look for fossils. Our land was under the ocean millions of years ago. When some of the creatures that lived in the ocean died, they sank to the bottom and were covered with mud. A long time ago the ocean dried up and many of the creatures turned to stone, or fossils. We've found big ones like this in our vineyard.

But my favorites are fossils that look like tiny stars. When we get home, we clean them with water and an old toothbrush. See how small they are compared to Dad's finger?

Tonight we're going to have dinner with Grandma. I'm helping Grandma make dinner. I'm making dressing for a salad made with endive, which is like lettuce. I use olive oil, mustard, vinegar, salt and pepper. Besides salad, we're having sausage, potatoes, green beans, cheese and bread.

French families almost always have dinner together on Sunday, but today we're having a special dinner to celebrate Three Kings Day. Three Kings Day is a Catholic holiday celebrating an old story that says three Kings knew a baby named Jesus would be born and went searching for him. We celebrate the day that the Kings are said to have finally found him in a city named Bethlehem.

To celebrate, we always have three kings cake for dessert. I'm going under the table so I can tell Mom who should get each piece of cake as she cuts it. The cake has a tiny statue baked into it, sort of a prize for the person who gets the piece of cake with it inside. Grandma wins! She's King for the day and she gets to wear a crown.

After dinner I go to our church hall for catechism class, where we learn about our Catholic religion. Most people in France are Catholics, and we go to church for special occasions like holy days and weddings.

After class we celebrate Tomas' birthday with a cake that he baked himself!

When I get home, I take a bath before I go to bed. Good night!

It's early morning in Lyon, the city where I live. While my sisters and I are still asleep, Dad goes to the boulangerie to buy bread for breakfast.

Dad wakes us up at about 7:15 to get ready for school. My name's Emilien. For breakfast I'm having cocoa and a croissant with a soft, buttery roll. I'm 10, and my sister Margaux's 14 and Lucie's 7.

Mom and Dad are divorced, so my sisters and I spend one week living with Dad and the next week with Mom. Dad's ironing Lucie's pants for school.

It's time for Lucie and me to leave for school. Lucie and I sometimes ride the public bus to school, which takes about 10 minutes. We buy a ticket that's good for 10 rides. This

machine prints the time and date on the ticket so we can tell how many rides we've used. Sometimes if the weather's bad, Dad drops us off at school, otherwise we usually walk.

Dad's on his way to work, which takes about 30 minutes. Dad's a laboratory technician, and his job is to test washing machines so he can help figure out ways his company can improve the machines they make. We can get just about anywhere on the Metro or by bus. Dad says that France has one of the best transportation systems anywhere.

Today it will take a little longer to get to work because there's a strike. In this strike, doctors, nurses and teachers are taking the day off to show that they want changes in government rules. France is a democracy, with freedom of speech, and people sometimes express their opinions with demonstrations like this.

While Dad's at work, we're at school. Lucie and I go to a public school, which means it's free for everyone. Lucie's in first grade and I'm in 6th. Our school was one of the first in the city to have such a good library.

Margaux goes to a school nearby. Today she has English, which is her favorite subject.

Her English class raises money for trips to countries where English is spoken. So far they've gone to England, the United States, Ireland and Scotland. One of their projects is selling rolls with chocolate filling to students during their break between classes. Kids are paying in Euros, which most countries in the European Union use now, instead of each country having its own money. It makes traveling and trading between countries easier.

Today during my lunch break I hurt my knee playing football, which is called soccer in some places. It's the most popular sport in France. The nurse says my knee's not bad, but she doesn't think I should walk home. Dad's still at work, so she calls Mom to come and pick us up.

Mom's a professional accordion player and singer. Mom also gives accordion lessons to students. Today Mom's practicing with Isobelle, her music partner. She and her partner give concerts in schools and other places and make CDs.

When Dad picks us up we stop at a fruit and vegetable market. We usually buy organic foods, which are grown without using chemicals. Dad thinks that's better for us and for the environment.

When we get home, I play my Game Boy. Neither Mom nor Dad have TV sets. They don't want us to spend time watching TV instead of getting interested in other things. They say advertising is bad for us because it tries to make us think we need to buy things in order to be happy.

Margaux's writing an English paper on how she spent the weekend. Most people in France think education is important and Mom says almost everyone here can read and write.

Lucie's using fake Euros with her toy cash register.

Dad's doing the laundry. Most people in France live in apartments in cities.

This is Tuesday, and on Tuesday nights we usually go with Dad to his Aikido class and then go out to eat afterwards. Aikido's a Japanese martial arts that teaches self-defense and self-control. The students with the black pants are the most advanced. On school nights I usually go to bed at 9, but we can stay up late tonight, because we never have school on Wednesdays.

It's Wednesday, so all French students have a vacation day from school. Dad worked extra hours last week when we were with Mom so he could be home with us today. Lucie thinks it's my turn to set the table so Dad shows her the chart we keep that says it's her turn.

Most families usually try to do something special on Wednesdays and Sundays since kids aren't in school. We like a reason to be outdoors. Every Sunday, even in winter, there's an art show along the river in Lyon. French people enjoy art and music, and some of the world's most famous poets, architects and composers are French.

Today Dad's making scalloped potatoes, sausage, and salad. And of course he'll get more fresh bread from the boulangerie. Lucie feeds Bruna, our rabbit.

After we eat, we visit my cousins. All of us like music, so when our family gets together we usually sing.

By the time we get back home, Margaux's almost late for swim club. Most activities like sports and music are done in clubs outside of school, often on Wednesdays. Margaux's swim club meets twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

I like basketball. Dad put up a basket in our garage so my friend Pierre and I can practice. We're on a city team that meets twice a week. On the way to practice we watch residents of our apartment building play an old French game called boules. The winner is the player who can get their ball closest to the little red target.

Today our basketball coach is showing us different ways to make baskets. Then we practice getting around a defender.

It's 9 o'clock when we get home, and tomorrow's a school day, so it's time for bed. When I have trouble falling asleep, Dad gives me a head massage. Hmmm, I think it's working..... Good night!

Glossary

Architects: People who design houses and buildings and other structures

Catechism: Questions and answers about religious knowledge

Catholic: A form of religion with Jesus Christ as a central figure and the pope as the head of the church.

Composers: People who write music

Democracy: A form of government where the rulers are elected by the people.

Divorced: People who have left their former marriage partners

Internet: The community of computer sites networked around the world

Lafayette: Marquis de Lafayette, young French officer who went to fight in the American Revolutionary War.

Laws: rules made by government to rule people

Martial Arts: Physical exercises and training derived from fighting and now used for sport

Poets: People who write poems

Punctuation: Rules to help people know where words stop, pause or ask questions.

Strike: A work action where the employees stop working as a group

Technologies: the set of tools that help people work

Discussion and Activities After Viewing

- Ask each child to list some of the similarities and differences between their family and school and those in the video.
- Invite someone from France to talk with the class about growing up in France and to play French music or tell a French story.
- Ask the class what things in the video tell us that the climate in France is like.
- Discuss why French and Spanish and Italian seem similar.
- Discuss the similarities and differences between the US and France in being wealthy countries with highly advanced technology.

Questions

1. What language is French?
2. What is wine made of and why do they drink it in France?
3. Why do the French think it is important to take a lot of time off for lunch?
4. Why do you think the French are proud of their language?
5. Why do they have a common currency in the European Common Market now?
6. Is France a very old country?

Answers to Questions

1. What language is French?

French is descended from Latin with numerous additions from invading Germanic tribes, and interaction with colonies.

2. What is wine made of and why do they drink it in France?

Wine is made from grapes. It has been around for over 6000 years. Drinking wine was safer than drinking water in the past as it kills bacteria. Wine seems to have been made in France since over 2000 years ago.

3. Why do the French think it is important to take a lot of time off for lunch?

The French have a very long history. They are proud of their civilization. They want to enjoy their cooking, their language, their arts and their way of life. They think Americans are mistaken to eat fast food, watch TV and work all the time.

4. Why do you think the French are proud of their language?

France has long been a leading nation of the world. For many hundreds of years French was the international language. It was spoken by all the aristocrats around Europe. It was the international language of diplomats. France also had colonies around the world. Many countries in Africa still use French as their national language.

5. Why do they have a common currency in the European Common Market now

Merchants trading among the various countries of Europe can now use only one kind of money instead of 15. It makes it easier to buy and sell.

6. Is France a very old country?

The French trace their roots to the Gauls who lived in France more than a thousand years before the coming of the Romans. Even counting back only to the Romans, it would be 2,000 years of history.

Some Things We've Learned About France

(Please circle the correct answer).

1. T F French is the national language of France.
2. T F Most people in France live in the cities.
3. T F France is on the continent of Europe.
4. T F Weather in most parts of France is hot.
5. T F A lot of wine is produced in France.
6. T F France has a long history.
7. T F Very few French use technology.
8. T F In France "football" or soccer is very popular.
9. T F The official currency of France is the euro.
- 10.T F France is a democracy.
- 11.T F France is a very large country.
- 12.T F France has some of the best transportation systems in the world.
- 13.T F Most people in France are Catholic
- 14.Draw a series of pictures telling Camille or Emilien's story. Try to include as much detail as you can remember from each part of the story.

Websites

www.franceguide.com

www.france.com

Activities

Construct a model of the Eiffel Tower

Use Cardboard cutouts for the base
Glue sections together

Use Cardboard cutouts for main tower

Use small cardboard strips to simulate iron trusses that criss cross within the tower

You may choose to spray paint with metallic silver paint



Recipes

Pear Flan

Serves 4- 6 persons

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 60 minutes

Ingredients:

2 large pears

3/4 cup whipping cream

3/4 cup milk

2 eggs

1/3 cup sugar

4 pinches of cinnamon

2 tablespoon butter

Directions:

First peel the pears and cut them half, remove seeds and slice them. Put the sliced pears in a saucepan with 2 tablespoons of sugar. Cook over low heat until tender. Preheat oven at 300 degrees. With butter grease some individual serving bowls (oven proof).

In a mixing bowl, stir eggs, milk, whipping cream and cinnamon. Pour mixture into each bowl and Place a couple pear slices in each bowl. Bake for 1 hour. Serve warm.

One can serve this dish with a chocolate or raspberry sauce.

Introduction

France is the largest country in Western and Central Europe. It is famous for its cuisine, its architecture, and culture. It is home to the Louvre museum, the Eiffel Tower, and the vineyards of Bordeaux, Burgundy and Champagne. With at least 75 million foreign tourists per year, France is the most visited country in the world and maintains the third largest income in the world from tourism.

The Land

France is about the size of Kenya or little smaller than the state of Texas. Its borders are well defined: The Atlantic to the west, the English Channel to the north, and mountains in the East and the South and the Mediterranean to the southeast. In the Alps near the Italian and Swiss borders is western Europe's highest point—Mont Blanc (15,781 ft; 4,810 m). The forest-covered Vosges Mountains are north of the Swiss border, and the Pyrénées are along the Spanish border. Only in the Northeast does relatively flat land merge into Belgium. The Rhine River borders Germany for 100 miles. Except for the northernmost part of France, the country may be described as four river basins and a plateau, the Massif Central in the south-central part of the country. Three of the rivers flow west—the Seine into the English Channel, the Loire into the Atlantic, and the Garonne into the Bay of Biscay. The Rhône flows south into the Mediterranean. In the Mediterranean, about 115 mi (185 km) east-southeast of Nice, lies the French island of Corsica (3,367 sq mi; 8,721 sq km).

The Climate

France has a temperate climate in the north; northeastern areas have a more continental climate with warmer summers and colder winters. Rainfall is distributed throughout the year with some snow likely in winter. The southwestern mountains have an alpine climate. The Mediterranean climate predominates in the south; mountains are cooler with heavy snows in winter. The Atlantic influences the climate of the western coastal areas from the Loire to the Basque region; the weather is temperate and relatively mild with

rainfall distributed throughout the year. Summers can be very hot and sunny. Inland areas are also mild and the French slopes of the Pyrenees are reputed for their sunshine record.

Plant and Animal Life

While much of the original habitat has been changed by human activity, there has been a vigorous reforestation program since the 19th century. Forests now cover about a quarter of the land area. France was entirely wooded before the Neolithic Period, when deciduous forests, principally beeches and oaks, covered the country except for temperate mountain forests composed of firs and piceas, and Mediterranean forests of pines and oaks in the southeast. Because of many thousands of years of intensive agricultural and pastoral activity, the forests have been largely destroyed. Extensive forests now exist only in the mountains, on soils that are unsuitable for agriculture, and in protected forest preserves. Only remnants of the original fauna, comprising mostly of deer, roebucks, and wild boars remain.

People

The French live in a modern industrialized society. They are highly urbanized. There are 40 French cities that have more than 100,000 inhabitants, but only Paris exceeds one million. About 75% of the population live in urban areas. The mingling of peoples over the centuries as well as immigration in the 20th century has given France great ethnic diversity. A large influx of predominantly North African immigrants has had a great effect on the cities, especially Paris and Marseille.

French is the nation's language. There are also a number of regional dialects, which are largely declining in usage. Alsatian, a German dialect, is spoken in Alsace and in parts of Lorraine. A small number speak Flemish in French Flanders. In Celtic Brittany, Breton is still spoken, as is Basque in the Bayonne region, Provençal in Provence, Catalan at the eastern end of the Pyrenees, and Corsican on the island of Corsica.

Roman Catholicism is the largest religion in France, nominally professed by about 80% of the population. With growing immigration from Asia, Turkey, and North Africa, France also has a large Muslim population, estimated at 3 to 6 million. There are smaller numbers of Protestants and Jews. The educational level in France is high. Among the universities the largest are

those of Paris, Lyons, Toulouse, Aix-Marseilles, Bordeaux, Lille, Montpellier, Strasbourg, Rennes, Grenoble, and Nancy.

History

Man has lived in France for tens of thousands of years. Archeological evidence show that 5000 years ago, Neolithic people in France left evidence of stone structures. About 3500 years ago, Celtic tribes entered into the area in large numbers. History begins when the Romans conquered the area about 2000 years ago. They brought Roman roads, cities and later Christianity. Roman power waned and in the 5th century the Franks, who gave the country its name, and other Germanic groups overran the country.

The Middle Ages were marked by a succession of power struggles between warring Frankish dynasties. The Capetian Dynasty was a time of prosperity and scholarly revivalism despite continued battles with England over feudal rights. During this period, France was also embroiled in the Crusades, a holy war instigated by the Church against non-Christians. The Capetian Dynasty waned by the early 15th century as France continued to fight England in the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453), which featured 17-year-old firebrand Jeanne d'Arc.

Religious and political persecution, culminating in the Wars of Religion (1562-98), continued to threaten France's stability during the 16th century. In 1572, some 3000 Protestant Huguenots were slaughtered in Paris. The Huguenots were later guaranteed religious, civil and political rights.

France was one of the earliest countries to progress from feudalism into the era of the nation-state. Its monarchs surrounded themselves with capable ministers, and French armies were among the most innovative, disciplined, and professional of their day. By the early 17th century the country led by the capable minister Cardinal Richelieu moved to establish an absolute monarchy and increase French power in Europe.

During the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715), France was the strongest power in Europe. But overly ambitious projects and military campaigns of Louis and his successors led to chronic financial problems in the 18th century.

Deteriorating economic conditions and popular resentment against the privileges granted the nobility and clerics were among the principal causes of the French Revolution (1789-94).

The country went through a period of changes between autocrats and democrats, the Empire of Napoleon, the Restoration of Louis XVIII, the reign of Louis-Philippe, and the Second Empire of Napoleon III. After the defeat in the Franco-Prussian War (1870), the Third Republic was established and lasted until the military defeat of 1940.

The first half of the twentieth century was tumultuous. World War I (1914-18) brought catastrophic losses of troops. During World War II, France was defeated early, and occupied in June 1940. After 4 years of occupation and strife, Allied forces liberated France in 1944.

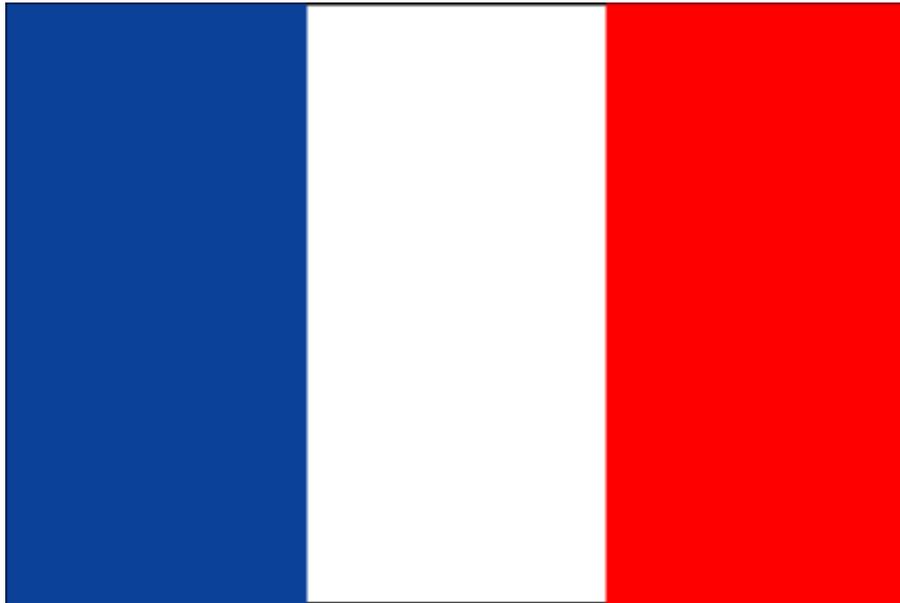
France emerged from World War II to face a series of new problems. The new government was led by a series of unstable coalitions and a consequent lack of agreement on measures for dealing with nationalist forces in Indochina and Algeria caused successive cabinet crises and changes of government.

Finally, on May 13, 1958, the government collapsed and General de Gaulle was called to head the government and prevent civil war. He became prime minister in June 1958 (at the beginning of the Fifth Republic) and was elected president in December of that year.

While France continues to revere its rich history and independence, French leaders are increasingly tying the future of France to the continued development of the European Union. During President Mitterrand's tenure, he stressed the importance of European integration.

Under President Chirac, France opposed the US invasion of Iraq. Attempts to cut taxes and reduce subsidies were met with nationwide strikes.

Current President Nicolas Sarkozy assumed office May 17, 2007, after a campaign focused on the need to combat France's stubbornly high unemployment rate. However, the economic reform and belt-tightening measures required for France to meet the criteria for Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) meant less spending. Today France is trying to both preserve its socialist goals of providing for the people and make its economy more flexible to compete in the world economy.



Basic Facts About France

Location: Western Europe, bordering the Bay of Biscay and English Channel, between Belgium and Spain, southeast of the UK; bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Italy and Spain

Geographic

coordinates: 46 00 N, 2 00 E

Map

references: Europe

Area: *total:* 547,030 sq km

land: 545,630 sq km

note: includes only metropolitan France; excludes the overseas administrative divisions

water: 1,400 sq km

Area -

comparative: slightly less than twice the size of Colorado

Land

boundaries: *total:* 2,889 km

border countries: Andorra 56.6 km, Belgium 620 km, Germany 451 km, Italy 488 km, Luxembourg 73 km, Monaco 4.4 km, Spain 623 km, Switzerland 573 km

Coastline: 3,427 km

Maritime

claims: *contiguous zone:* 24 NM

territorial sea: 12 NM

continental shelf: 200-m depth or to the depth of exploitation

exclusive economic zone: 200 NM (does not apply to the Mediterranean)

Climate: generally cool winters and mild summers, but mild winters and hot summers along the Mediterranean; occasional strong, cold, dry, north-to-northwesterly wind known as mistral

Terrain: mostly flat plains or gently rolling hills in north and west; remainder is mountainous, especially Pyrenees in south, Alps in east

Elevation

extremes: *lowest point:* Rhone River delta -2 m

highest point: Mont Blanc 4,807 m

Natural

resources: coal, iron ore, bauxite, zinc, potash, timber, fish

Land use: *arable land:* 33%

permanent crops: 2%

other: 65% (2008 est.)

Irrigated land:

26,300 sq km (2008 est.)

Natural

hazards: flooding; avalanches; midwinter windstorms; drought; forest fires in south near the Mediterranean

Environment -

current issues: some forest damage from acid rain (major forest damage occurred as a result of severe December 1999 windstorm); air pollution from industrial and vehicle emissions; water pollution from urban wastes, agricultural runoff

Geography -

note: largest West European nation

People

Population: 64,057,983 (July 2009 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 18.6%

15-64 years: 65.2%

65 years and over: 16.2% (2008 est.)

Population

growth rate: 0.549% (2009 est.)

Birth rate: 12.73 births/1,000 population (2009 est.)

Death rate: 8.48 deaths/1,000 population (2009 est.)

Net migration

rate:

1.48 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2009 est.)

Infant

mortality rate: 3.36 deaths/1,000 live births (2008 est.)

Life

expectancy at

birth: *total population:* 80.87 years
female: 84.23 years (2009 est.)
male: 77.78 years

Total fertility

rate: 1.98 children born/woman (2009 est.)

Nationality: *noun:* Frenchman(men), Frenchwoman(women)
adjective: French

Ethnic groups:

Celtic and Latin with Teutonic, Slavic, North African, Indochinese, Basque minorities

Religions: Roman Catholic 83%-88%, Protestant 2%, Jewish 1%, Muslim 5%-10%, unaffiliated 4%

Languages: French 100%, rapidly declining regional dialects and languages (Provençal, Breton, Alsatian, Corsican, Catalan, Basque, Flemish)

Literacy: *definition:* age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 99%
male: 99%
female: 99% (2005 est.)

Country name:

conventional long form: French Republic
conventional short form: France
local long form: Republique Francaise
local short form: France

Government

Government

type: republic

Capital: Paris

Administrative

divisions: 22 regions (regions, singular - region); Alsace, Aquitaine, Auvergne, Basse-Normandie, Bourgogne, Bretagne, Centre, Champagne-Ardenne, Corse, Franche-Comte, Haute-Normandie, Ile-de-France, Languedoc-Roussillon, Limousin, Lorraine, Midi-Pyrenees, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Pays de la Loire, Picardie, Poitou-Charentes, Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur, Rhone-Alpes
note: metropolitan France is divided into 22 regions

(including the "territorial collectivity" of Corse or Corsica) and is subdivided into 96 departments; see separate entries for the overseas departments (French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Reunion) and the overseas territorial collectivities (Mayotte, Saint Pierre and Miquelon)

Dependent

areas: Bassas da India, Clipperton Island, Europa Island, French Polynesia, French Southern and Antarctic Lands, Glorioso Islands, Juan de Nova Island, New Caledonia, Tromelin Island, Wallis and Futuna

note: the US does not recognize claims to Antarctica

Independence: 486 (unified by Clovis)

National

holiday: Bastille Day, 14 July (1789)

Constitution: 28 September 1958, amended concerning election of president in 1962, amended to comply with provisions of EC Maastricht Treaty in 1992, Amsterdam Treaty in 1996, Treaty of Nice in 2000; amended to tighten immigration laws 1993

Legal system: civil law system with indigenous concepts; review of administrative but not legislative acts

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Executive

branch: *chief of state:* President Nicolas SARKOZY (since 16 May 2007)

head of government: Prime Minister 9

cabinet: Council of Ministers appointed by the president on the suggestion of the prime minister

Legislative

branch: bicameral Parliament or Parlement consists of the Senate or Senat (321 seats - 296 for metropolitan France, 13 for overseas departments and territories, and 12 for French nationals abroad; members are indirectly elected by an electoral college to serve nine-year terms; elected by thirds every three years) and the National Assembly or Assemblée Nationale (577 seats; members are elected by popular vote under a single-member majoritarian system to serve five-year terms)

Judicial branch:

Supreme Court of Appeals or Cour de Cassation (judges are appointed by the president from nominations of the High Council of the Judiciary); Constitutional Council or Conseil Constitutionnel (three members appointed by the president, three appointed by the president of the National Assembly, and three appointed by the president of the Senate); Council of State or Conseil d'Etat

Diplomatic representation

in the US: *chancery:* 4101 Reservoir Road NW, Washington, DC 20007

FAX: [1] (202) 944-6166

consulate(s) general: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, and San Francisco

telephone: [1] (202) 944-6000

Diplomatic representation

from the US: *embassy:* 2 Avenue Gabriel, 75008 Paris

mailing address: PSC 116, B210 APO AE 09777

telephone: [33] (1) 43-12-22-22

FAX: [33] (1) 42 66 97 83

consulate(s) general: Marseille, Strasbourg

Flag

description: three equal vertical bands of blue (hoist side), white, and red; known as the French Tricolore (Tricolor); the design and/or colors are similar to a number of other flags, including those of Belgium, Chad, Ireland, Cote d'Ivoire, Luxembourg, and Netherlands

Economy

Economy -

overview: France is in the midst of transition from a well-to-do modern economy that has featured extensive government ownership and intervention to one that relies more on market mechanisms. The government has partially or fully privatized many large companies, banks, and insurers, and has ceded stakes in such leading firms as Air France, France Telecom, Renault, and Thales. It maintains a strong presence in some sectors, particularly power, public

transport, and defense industries. The telecommunications sector is gradually being opened to competition. France's leaders remain committed to a capitalism in which they maintain social equity by means of laws, tax policies, and social spending that reduce income disparity and the impact of free markets on public health and welfare. Widespread opposition to labor reform has in recent years hampered the government's ability to revitalize the economy. In 2007, the government launched divisive labor reform efforts that will continue into 2008. France's tax burden remains one of the highest in Europe (nearly 50% of GDP in 2005). France brought the budget deficit within the eurozone's 3%-of-GDP limit for the first time in 2007 and has reduced unemployment to roughly 8%. Like other major economies, the financial crisis of 2008 has impacted the economy, with exports down 25% in 2009, and the economy shrinking by 2.1%.

GDP: purchasing power parity - \$2.113 trillion (2009 est.)

GDP - real

growth rate: -2.1% (2009 est.)

GDP - per

capita: purchasing power parity - \$32,800 (2009 est.)

GDP -

composition by *agriculture:* 2.2%

sector: *industry:* 21.0%

services: 76.7% (2008)

**Household
income or
consumption by
percentage**

share: *lowest 10%:* 3.0%

highest 10%: 24.8% (2008)

Inflation rate

(consumer

prices): -0.1% (2009 est.)

Labor force: 27.99 million (2009 est.)

Labor force - by

occupation: services 71%, industry 25%, agriculture 4% (2008)

Unemployment

rate: 9.7% (2009 est.)

Industries: machinery, chemicals, automobiles, metallurgy, aircraft, electronics; textiles, food processing; tourism

Industrial production -9.0% (2009)
growth rate:

Agriculture -

products: wheat, cereals, sugar beets, potatoes, wine grapes; beef, dairy products; fish

Exports: \$548 billion (f.o.b., 2007)

Exports -

commodities: machinery and transportation equipment, aircraft, plastics, chemicals, pharmaceutical products, iron and steel, beverages

Exports - Germany 15.6%, Spain 9.6%, Italy 8.9%, UK 8.3%,

partners: Belgium 7.3%, US 6.6%, Netherlands 4% (2006)

Imports: \$600 billion (f.o.b., 2007)

Imports -

commodities: machinery and equipment, vehicles, crude oil, aircraft, plastics, chemicals

Imports -

partners: Germany 18.9%, Belgium 11.1%, Italy 8.4%, Spain 7%, Netherlands 6.8%, UK 6.6%, US 4.6% (2006)

Currency: euro (EUR)

Exchange rates:

euros per US dollar – 0.7338 (2009), 0.7345 (2007), 1.1324 (January 2002), 1.1175 (2001), 1.0854 (2000), 0.9386 (1999)

Communications

**Telephones -
main lines in** 35 million (2009)
use:
Cell phones: 58 million (2009)

Transportation

Railways: *total:* 29,370 km

Highways: *total:* 950,985 km

paved: 892,900 km (including 10,490km of expressways)

Waterways: 14,932 km (6,969 km heavily traveled)

Ports: Bordeaux, Boulogne, Cherbourg, Dijon, Dunkerque, La
Pallice, Le Havre, Lyon, Marseille, Mullhouse, Nantes, Paris,
Rouen, Saint Nazaire, Saint Malo, Strasbourg

Airports: 270 with paved runways (2009)