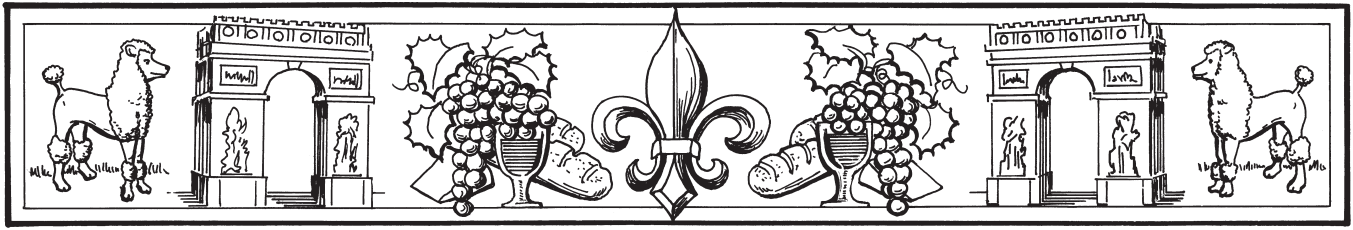


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France

France is the largest country in western Europe. In both manufacturing and trade, France is a world leader. Citizens are guaranteed free national health care and education. Population shifts from northern Africa and eastern Europe continue to affect French society and economy. Currently, France exports food and energy, as well as agricultural and manufactured goods, to countries in the European Union. France’s culture and language have influenced the world for centuries. The natural beauty and richness of France is famous throughout the world. Tourism enhances the economy as people come to marvel at art collections, wander through towns of ancient to very modern architecture, indulge in fabulous meals, and view the gorgeous scenery.

France has a close relationship with the United States. Economically, politically, and militarily, the two countries have had a long, and occasionally turbulent, connection. During the early 1600s, French voyagers, fur trappers, nuns, and priests made the trip across the Atlantic Ocean to America. Philosophers of the French Enlightenment influenced Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and other Americans who wrote the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. The Marquis de LaFayette and other Frenchmen fought for the Colonies in the American Revolution. During WWI and WWII, American soldiers fought for France in the trenches and on the beaches of Normandy. The Statue of Liberty in New York was a gift from France celebrating 100 years of freedom; a smaller version of the statue—a gift from the U.S. to France—nestles along the Seine River. Each year, North American and French students study each other’s language and culture in cities across the United States and France. France and the United States are connected through years of common need and interest.

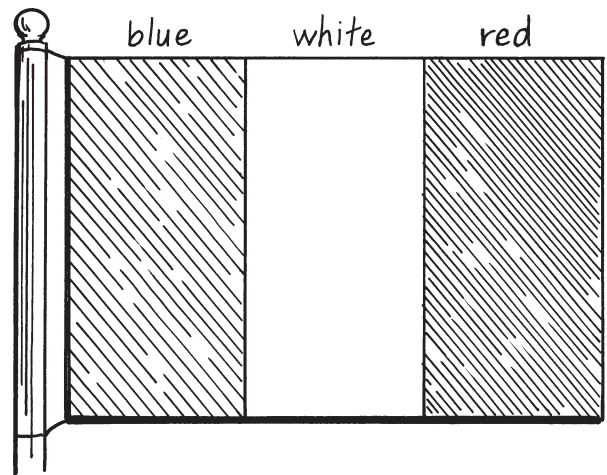
Area—552,000 square kilometers (213,000 square miles)

Form of Government—Democratic republic

Flag—*Le Tricolore*, the French flag, is composed of three vertical panels of blue, white, and red.

National Anthem—“*La Marseillaise*.” The national anthem was written during the French Revolution.

Population—About 57 million. One-sixth of the people live in the capital city of Paris.



Other highly populated cities include Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, and Nice. Immigrants comprise 7% of the population and come from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, and Indochina.

Geographical Regions—Mediterranean areas, Pyrenees Mountains near Spain, Alps and Jura mountains near Switzerland, Central Highlands, Aquitanian Lowlands, Rhine River Valley and Vosges Mountains near Germany, Northeast Plateau near Belgium, northern plains, Brittany–Normandy Hills near the Atlantic coast, and Corsica, an island near Italy.

Climate—Most of France experiences moderately warm summers and mild, cool winters, with mild precipitation all year. In the south of France by the Mediterranean Sea, however, summers are hot and dry. The famous mistral winds—winds that blow across France from the Atlantic—blow cold and strong in the winter. On the Atlantic side, the weather is milder with much rain. Inland, the climate changes with the seasons.

Language—French. The dialect spoken in Paris became standard French in the 1500s. Breton, spoken in Brittany, and Basque, spoken near the Pyrenees, are two other languages spoken in France. *L'Académie Française* (The French Academy), a prestigious academic institution, is in charge of keeping the national language accurate and purged of non-French words. The French language is highly prized as the “essence of being French.”

Religion—75% Roman Catholic, 3% Muslim, 2% Protestant, 1% Jewish. The remaining people are atheist or have no strong religious beliefs.

Money—1 franc = 100 centimes. Francs are decorated with the faces of artists, scientists, musicians, and other cultural icons. For example, the 10 franc note features Berlioz, the composer, and the 50 franc note features Corneille, a 17th century playwright.

