Quick tip: don’t tip At French restaurants, service is included in the price of your meal. If you’re particularly pleased with service, leave a few coins on the table. The same goes for taxis.

10 hours each way It’s a 10-hour drive from the northernmost part of France to the southernmost, and from the westernmost part of France to the easternmost.

Many countries, one currency The euro is the currency in France and in most European countries. That helps simplify currency exchange. Different countries have different designs, so collect them all—they circulate throughout the European Union.

Hi, neighbor! Plan a trip to the beautiful countries and principalities that border metropolitan France: Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Monaco, Andorra and Spain.

Deliciously diverse cuisine Each French region boasts a distinctive cuisine. Wine sauces and snails in Burgundy. Buckwheat crêpes and seafood in Brittany. Sauerkraut dishes in Alsace. Cheese fondue in the Alps. Tomato and garlic-based dishes in Provence. And that’s just to name a few!

Day trips Within a short drive or train ride from Paris, you can experience many different regions of France, such as Normandy, Alsace, and Burgundy. Each has distinct architecture, landscapes, cuisines and traditions.

A few useful French terms
Bonjour (pronounced boh-zhoor) = Hello (during the day)
Merci (pronounced mayr-see) = Thank you
Au revoir (pronounced oh-reh-vwahr) = Goodbye
Où sont les toilettes ? (pronounced ooh-soh-lay-twa-let) = Where is the restroom?
**The Iron Lady sparkles** The Eiffel Tower is the most-visited paid monument in the world. Its 20,000 lights flash during the first five minutes of each hour after nightfall—until 2 a.m. in the summer and 1 a.m. in the winter.

**Do you know you know French?** About 40% of English words come from the French language. Most were introduced after the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The Duke of Normandy (“William The Conqueror”) ruled England for the next 21 years and introduced new vocabulary along the way.

**Get there fast** The TGV, or **Train à Grande Vitesse** (High Speed Train), is the fastest way to travel to more than 1,400 destinations in Europe, with record-breaking speeds of up to 320 km/h.

**Hang up and slow down** Planning to drive in France? Radar speed detectors are everywhere, so drive exactly the speed limit. And don’t use your cell phone while driving—that will cost you a lot of euros too. The good news: These measures have resulted in a steady drop in car accidents.

**Power conversion** France uses 220V. You’ll need a voltage converter and a plug adapter if your country doesn’t use 220V—or if it has different plug and socket types.

**Number one** France is the world’s top tourist destination, with 83 million foreign tourists annually.

**One language** French is the official language of France, but regional languages are also spoken, such as Germanic dialects (Alsatian), Celtic languages (Breton), and other Gallo-Roman languages (Langues d’Oïl, Occitan).

**July 14** Bastille Day, called **14 juillet** in French, commemorates the storming of the Bastille—a significant event leading to the French Revolution. In Paris, watch a military parade on the Champs-Élysées, enjoy fireworks set off from the Eiffel Tower and dance through the night.

**Phone bill awareness** If you’re using a phone with a plan from a country other than France, ask your service provider about costs for using your phone abroad. Some providers offer international packages. Skype may be used on some phones if Wifi is available.