



THE ESSENTIAL STUDENTS' GUIDE TO FRANCE  
2005/2006

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## INTRODUCTION

When we first started thinking about spending part of our medical degree studying abroad in France, we had mixed opinions ranging from “you’re totally mad” to “you’re completely mad!” There is no doubt that studying abroad can be hard. It takes a lot of getting used to, and can be totally mind-boggling at times. Both of us would agree however, that this has been an amazing experience and we would do it all over again given the opportunity. A period of study abroad can be the best experience of your university life, but at the same time it can also be the most challenging and demanding. We spent 5 months of our medical degree in Paris, and after that time, France comes with a whole hearted seal of approval; But, there are certain things that we wish we had known before coming so this guide aims to give you all the little pearls of wisdom that we wish we’d known!

Enjoy your time abroad and Good Luck! Jess and Alison, France 2005-6

### **Official guides :**

*Let's Go Guide to France, Lonely Planet Guide to France or Rough Guide to France* (prices range from £13-£15). The ISIC handbook also provides useful information on travelling in Europe.

### **Our recommended reads:**

A year in the Merde  
 50 million Frenchmen can't be wrong  
 Rude French – an alternative French phrasebook  
 Harraps Slang dictionary  
 A must see film: L'auberge Espangol

## i) CHECKLIST

### **Now the practical stuff**

Musts: and take photocopies of these before leaving!

- Insurance
- Long Birth Certificate with certified translation
- Attestation of two years' previous study at your home university
- Recent passport photographs (about 4)
- Proof that you have sufficient income to support yourself while abroad in the form of evidence that you receive a Maintenance Grant or a letter from your parents stating that they will support you financially during the year or a recent bank statement
- A European health card
- A valid passport !!!

**Additionally...**

- Inform your bank that you are going on your year abroad and ask them to help you with Traveller's Cheques/Foreign Currency. Remember the post Office has no commission charges on foreign currency
- Sort out travel arrangements and book tickets.
- Arrange with your home-doctor that you have supplies of any prescription medication that you may need while you are abroad.

**GETTING THERE**

The method of travel to and from your host destination will obviously depend on where you are going. You may wish to take a train or coach as the distance is relatively small, but the majority of students prefer to fly out, especially at the beginning of the year, because it is easier.

**i) BY AIR**

Check out all the budget airlines, such as Easyjet ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)) Thomson fly or Ryanair ([www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)).

Usually, the further ahead you can book with these airlines, the cheaper deal you can find. There are also a whole host of websites dedicated to finding cheap flights (some of which are listed at the end of this section), so it's worth shopping around. Though if booked far enough in advance BA do a cheap flight to Paris from Bristol.

A disadvantage with flying is that you are limited as to the amount of baggage you can take with you. The normal limit is 20kg of luggage or 23kg if you are flying with British Airways, not including hand baggage. If you are slightly over this limit then the airline will sometimes turn a blind eye but heavy excess will be charged for at a rate of 1% of the full price airfare per kilogram. If in doubt make sure you arrive to check in early because as the plane fills up they will be more likely to charge you!

**ii) BY COACH**

Eurolines (who are part of National Express Coaches) run coaches from Victoria coach station to over 250 destinations in Europe. 25s and under can get discounted tickets but even the full fare is relatively inexpensive. There are Eurolines agents in most large towns and you may find this a cheap way of travelling home after your initial journey. Reservations can also be made through any National Express office, or online at [www.nationalexpress.com](http://www.nationalexpress.com). Eurolines return tickets are valid for up to six months for all international services and open-ended return tickets are available on the majority of services - but return journeys must be reserved at least four days in advance.

**iii) BY EUROSTAR**

Although sometimes a more expensive option, the advantage of the Eurostar service is that there is no limit on baggage allowance so it's worth considering for the way home! The Eurostar service, running between London Waterloo and Paris, takes about three hours (one way) and offers special cut-rate tickets to students under 26.

A return ticket London to Paris will cost around £60 at under-26 rate. The return portion is valid for 60 days but the date and time of return must be booked at the same time as the outward journey. Watch out for 2 for 1 offers in the papers.

iv) REIMBURSEMENT BY THE LEA

If you are eligible for financial support from your LEA, you will usually be eligible for help with travel expenses for your year abroad. This would, however, be for 'reasonable' expenses and most LEAs will only give money back if you have used the **cheapest means of transport available**. Further information is available at:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/uploads/FSS-Purple-guide-04-05.pdf>

**Contact your LEA before you leave to confirm what you are entitled to.**

v) OTHER ODDS & SODS

**Cheap Flights**

[www.cheapflights.co.uk/](http://www.cheapflights.co.uk/)

[www.travelocity.co.uk/](http://www.travelocity.co.uk/)

[www.expedia.co.uk/](http://www.expedia.co.uk/)

[www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)

[www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)

[www.thompsonfly.com](http://www.thompsonfly.com)

[www.flybe.com](http://www.flybe.com)

[www.bmibaby.com](http://www.bmibaby.com)

**Other Stuff**

Euro Railways

[www.eurorailways.com/](http://www.eurorailways.com/)

Travelstore

[www.travelstore.com/](http://www.travelstore.com/)

Rough Guides

[www.roughguides.com/](http://www.roughguides.com/)

Lonely Planet

[www.lonelyplanet.com/](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/)

## TAKING A CAR ABROAD

If you intend to take a car onto mainland Europe then the elementary principles should be adhered to: drive on the RIGHT-HAND SIDE of the road!

If your car satisfies the construction and user regulations in its own country (MOT etc.), it can be driven elsewhere in Europe. If the car you are intending to drive is not registered in your name you are advised to carry a letter of authorisation with you. Please note that you are still required to display a 'GB' sticker on the rear of your vehicle, unless your vehicle has euro-plates (circle of 12 stars, national identifier, blue background). It is also compulsory for British cars to have headlamp converters.

Make sure you find out about the laws and restrictions in the country you will be visiting. If you're caught speeding don't think the French police can't catch up with you in England they do!! If you do not respect its highway code, you may be heavily penalised, so don't be tempted to rely on British regulations. In France, drivers must always carry their driving licence, *carte grise* (ownership document) and insurance document, as well as the *vignette* (road tax). If the vehicle is not registered in your name, carry a letter from the registered owner giving you permission to drive. The French police are empowered to check a driver's ID at any time and you may find yourself penalised with an on the spot fine if you do not have any with you.

Don't think that road safety rules are any different in Europe, Drunk Driving and Parking Offences are just as serious in France as in England!

### i) DRIVING LICENCES

Driving licences are now equally valid in all Member States of the EU

### ii) VEHICLE INSURANCE

Your insurance policy may not cover everything in Europe as it does in the UK don't assume it does, check with your company before you leave!

Vehicles must be taxed for the duration of the stay. If the tax runs out during the year, then it should be renewed either at home or from the country you are studying in.

Alternatively you can change your insurance policy and take out a French one, even if your car is not French. If you are an assistant this is well worth doing. One of the perks of working for the Education Nationale is that you can get very cheap car insurance. You should enquire at your local office of MAIF, the company that offers cheap insurance to fonctionnaires. There are many advantages of being insured in France. The policy covers the car and not the individual, unlike in Britain. This means that if you give someone your permission they will be insured to drive your

car. In addition, a green card is automatically provided at no further cost so you can drive freely in any other European country that is included in the agreement.

If you do decide to take out insurance in France for a car you have brought from Britain or one that you have bought in France, make sure you bring any valid certificate of 'no claims' because you can get a discount in France.

### iii) CUSTOMS

If you are taking a vehicle abroad it must be for your personal use and not for the purpose of selling or loaning it abroad. If you do intend to sell your vehicle outside the UK, then you must first obtain the consent of the Customs Authorities. If you are a member of another country within the EU you may keep your vehicle with you for a maximum of twelve months; after this period it will be assumed to have been exported and should be registered locally. If you are a member of a non-EU country, you will have to register your vehicle after it has been in the country for 6 months.

### iv) TOLLS

Motorways in many parts of Europe are maintained by a toll system; France, Italy and Spain all charge for the use of motorways whilst in Austria charges are levied on some of the major routes.

### v) CHECKLIST

- International Motor Insurance Card, or green card: this is an internationally recognised certificate of motor insurance
- Valid national driving licence for EU students or valid international licence for others
- An International Driving Permit or translated licence if necessary
- Valid road tax
- Valid MOT
- Beam-benders for the headlamps
- A document showing your place of abode, if the residence permit has not yet been obtained
- Vehicle registration documents (V5)
- A GB sticker on the front and back of the vehicle (if non euro-plates).
- Travel emergency kit (must include warning triangle, also recommended to contain a first aid kit, spare bulbs and a fire extinguisher)

### vi) ALSO ...

The Association of British Insurers publish an information leaflet for those intending to travel abroad, which includes a section on motor insurance. Write to them at: 51 Gresham Street, London EC2V 7HQ or [info@abi.org.uk](mailto:info@abi.org.uk)

Both the AA and the RAC offer help and guidelines for driving abroad to their members:

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Automobile Association  
Fanum House  
Basingstoke  
Hampshire  
RG21 4EA  
Tel: 0800 444 500  
[www.theaa.com](http://www.theaa.com)

RAC Motoring Services  
PO Box 700  
Bristol  
BS99 1RB  
Tel: 0800 550 550  
[www.rac.co.uk](http://www.rac.co.uk)

**For further information** contact the French Embassy: 020 7073 1200 or  
[www.ambafrance-uk.org/](http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/)

## PRACTICAL PLANNING

### i) CUSTOMS

If you intend on bringing any large quantities back check customs limits before departure!

### ii) IMMIGRATION

**If you are not an EU National or a national of Liechtenstein or Switzerland, you need to apply for a Visa to go to France.** NB note well this can be a long and labourious process and may involve several trips to the french consulate in london and lots of time queing so give yourself plenty of time to sort it all out. Make sure to contact the French Embassy's Visa and Immigration Services on (020) 7073 1250, to find out what it entails. Allow yourself at least THREE months before departure to organise this.

### iii) INSURANCE

Endsleigh Insurance has a Bristol branch (tel.0117 9294871 address: 14/15 Triangle South, Clifton, Bristol) they offer rates for students for programs abroad. Although other travel insurance companies also provide various policies. Be prepared for the unexpected to happen - it is always better to be over, as opposed to under, insured.

### iv) BENEFIT ENTITLEMENTS

If you are receiving any form of benefit then the best idea is to contact the Centre for Non-Residents Helpline for advice. They will advise British Nationals who are moving or studying abroad, on National Insurance contributions and healthcare (for further details see: <http://www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/cnr/index.htm>). The contact details are:

Centre for Non-Residents  
Inland Revenue NICO  
BPI302 CNR, Longbenton,  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE98 1ZZ  
Tel: 0845 915 4811

### v) DISABILITIES & SPECIAL NEEDS

Students with disabilities or special needs have equal access to and are actively encouraged to go on a year abroad. Please make sure you go and see your coordinators at your home university and contact your host institution for more information as facilities vary at different universities.

**MONEY MATTERS****i) MAINTENANCE GRANTS & LOANS**

Whilst the financial arrangements for your year abroad are your responsibility, there are options available to help. Your LEA: you can obviously seek advice from your local education authority (LEA) to check whether or not you will be eligible for any extra money while you are abroad. The information listed below is intended only as a guide and it is essential that you check with your LEA for individual advice. If you are studying in another country for 8 or more weeks as part of your degree, you are likely to be eligible for a higher rate of student loan. For more information on how much extra you can receive, contact your LEA. Further information is also available at:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/uploads/FSS-Purple-guide-04-05.pdf>

**Visa Costs and Compulsory Medical Tests**

Where visa costs are incurred or medical tests required by the country to which you are going your local authority may reimburse these if you get a maintenance award. Before you leave the UK you should tell your bank that you will be spending the next academic year abroad. They will be able to advise you on managing your finances - there is a wide range of possibilities on offer. Exchange rate inequalities between the pound and European currency as well as bank and credit card fees (often surprisingly high) make it all the more essential to manage your money in the most effective way possible.

**ii) MONEY METHODS**

**Travellers' cheques:** the daddy of all currency methods. Well I reckon so anyway. Because you have to sign them when you buy them, and countersign them when you sell them, they are über-secure. Also, because they are all recorded (make sure you note the cheque numbers), losing one means you can claim them back pretty fast (usually within 24hrs). Remember to inform both your bank and the local police. You can get 2 types of travellers' cheques, local currency and sterling. Although sterling is cheaper, you'll pay an exchange charge, unlike local currency cheques, which are a little more expensive, but better in my opinion.

**Individual banks:** these obviously offer a wide range of services, although I'm sure you're only going to need one that lets you transfer lump sums across the water. Best way to do that would be to let your mum/dad/milkman/whoever be third party to your home bank account, so they can throw money at you, international stylee. I would give the contact details of most high street banks here, but it's best to simply go with whichever bank you're with at the moment.

**IMO** (international money order): IMOs are pre-designed drafts available in most major currencies (although not yen), which are used for sending funds abroad, and are available in amounts up to £10,000. Commission can cost up to a tenner, and if

you do it through your own bank at home, the cost will just come out of your account. As with all things, you'll need ID when buying an IMO, and again when you cash it in France. You may get trouble trying to get IMOs from banks other than your own, so we advise going with what you know! Similar to IMOs are **priority payment schemes**, which can be used if money is needed a little more sharpish. This said, they would cost more to exchange. Chat to your local bank for this, or something very similar.

**Visa and MasterCard:** these are both worldwide payment schemes, where cards can be used for payment and cash withdrawal whenever the visa MasterCard symbols are shown. Most shops and supermarkets will take visa (albeit with minimum charge of about 20 squids), although a lot of pubs don't. You can also use them to change money at banks and Bureau de Changes (sp?), but as always will charge commission.

**Cirrus and Maestro:** these are the ones that are on most debit cards, and therefore aren't accepted as often. You can use them in cash machines, but again your bank'll charge you (about £1.50). If I've said it once, I've said it hundreds of times, but do go and chat to your bank, they'll know exactly what's going on, and how it affects you!

**General advice:** Always read the small print in your Visa or Travellers Cheque information. If in doubt ask your bank to clarify exactly what charges will be levied.

### iii) FINANCE & EMPLOYMENT

France is expensive but it is relatively easy to find employment and ease the financial strain of the year abroad. With the SMIC (France's minimum wage policy), you can be guaranteed at least 7.19€ an hour even for the most menial work, private work often a little lower. However you tackle your finances, getting a French bank account is a must, particularly if you intend to work.

### iv) FRENCH BANKS

If you are a foreigner staying in France for more than 3 months, you are entitled to open a bank account. It is possible to do this by visiting one of the French banks in the UK prior to leaving for France, but many people open them once in France. According to some students, many banks are not particularly friendly towards International students opening accounts but most people find that Crédit Lyonnais (good student account with a carte bleu visa card and cheque book, free for up to 6 months & easy to open), Banque Populaire, Société Générale, are the most sympathetic. Watch out for monthly charges incurred just for having an account. Be wary of La Poste however, although a cheapish option, watch out for charges that they may not tell you about initially and they are incredibly slow, cards can take months to arrive and cheque books even longer. Avoid Crédit Agricole as well as a number of students have had problems with them because they were not French nationals. Instead of giving International students a normal French bank account, they have been known to been given a *compte étranger* which provides very limited services.

**Carte Bleu:** This is by far the most convenient method of payment in France. They are accepted almost everywhere including motorway toll booths, car parks and automatic ticket machines.

**Cheques:** There is an agreement between banks in Europe, which provides a very convenient alternative to the Eurocheque. If you wish to send money from France to someone in Britain, you can do this by simply writing a French cheque in pounds sterling. You must check with your bank how to fill in the cheque correctly, and also enquire as to whether you will be charged for the transaction. It seems that with small amounts of about thirty or forty pounds there is no charge but as soon as the figure rises, so does the commission rate. It also depends on how friendly you are with your bank manager!

**Overdrafts** of up to about 450€ can be arranged with your bank but they **MUST** be arranged prior to going into the red: failure to do so may mean you are breaking the law. **There is no automatic overdraft facility for students** and any arranged overdraft will not function in the same way as in Britain so read all the small print before you sign anything. You will probably have to provide proof of income such as a grant or parental contribution.

To open a bank account you will need:

- A student card or letter from your host university.
- Local student card,
- Proof of address – rent documents etc.
- Passport and/or birth certificate
- There are minimum sums needed to be deposited on opening an account, find these out for your specific account, normally about 20 euros.
- A British bank statement or a letter from your parents saying that they will support you.

Some banks may ask for a declaration that you will not become overdrawn before you can open your account. It will be opened immediately and you will receive your chequebook and cash point card within 3 weeks. For some cash point cards you have to pay a subscription fee of about £10 but this means you will not have to pay commission on each withdrawal. You will not be given a cheque guarantee card as they are not necessary, but may be asked to present a piece of identification when you write a cheque.

## v) EMPLOYMENT

Under EU law, all residents of the EU have the right to seek employment in France, or to set up their own business, and do not require a work permit to do so. The only conditions that apply to this law are that you are in possession of a full British or new European Passport and that you are a Commonwealth citizen who has right of abode in the UK. Your passport must state that you are a British Citizen and have had right of abode in the UK since 1983.

On entry, a worker seeking employment is allowed 'a reasonable period' (normally up to three months) to find a job. Once work has been obtained or s/he is established in business, s/he must apply for a special residence permit for nationals of member states of the EU. These permits are valid for the period of employment if it is likely to be less than 12 months; otherwise they are valid for 5 years and automatically renewable. A worker's dependants are also entitled to residence permits, which are required by all foreigners residing in France for more than three months.

With the new EU law allowing freedom of movement in order to seek work, one would have thought that finding a job in France was a relatively simple task. Unfortunately, it is quite the opposite. There seems to have been a delay in the enforcement of the law and people are often faced with frustrating difficulties despite being a member of the European Union. If you have your *Carte de Séjour* already, then you are entitled to work, but if you do not have one, you may have a lot of difficulty in finding someone to employ you. The *Préfecture* will not give you one unless you have a *contrat de travail*. It is an unnecessary vicious circle and there is very little that can be done about it at present. However, as a student or an Assistant you will already be entitled to the card, so the best advice is, if you do intend to seek work, apply for your *Carte de Séjour* as soon as possible.

A worker's spouse who is not a national of an EU member state should apply for a visa or make enquiries at a French Consulate before travelling to France.

**Employment and Social Security:** If you are employed in France, you will normally be subject to French Social Security legislation and be liable to pay contributions to the French schemes for pensions, sickness (including health care) and unemployment benefit. The French employer should obtain a Social Security number for you. As a rule, you would be required to show your full translated birth certificate in order to join the French Social Security scheme.

Information on the French schemes and your entitlement to benefit under them can be obtained from:

- Your local Caisse Primaire D'Assurance Maladie (CPAM), regarding pensions and sickness benefit and family allowances;
- The local Association pour l'emploi dans l'Industrie et le Commerce (ASEDIC), in respect of unemployment benefit,
- The French Embassy in London or from the National Insurance Contributions Office, International Services, Longbenton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE98 IZZ.

**Non-EU Nationals** intending to work in France should enquire at the nearest French Consulate-General (addresses at the end).

**Student Employment:** Student employees who are UK nationals do not need a work permit; the student employee is advised to obtain from his/her employer a Contrat de Travail on the standard form. Student employees may be required to contribute to the French Social Security scheme. UK nationals may be entitled to immediate health treatment provided through the French scheme under the

European Community Social Security regulations but the European Healthcard will be required.

The local employment agency, l'Agence Nationale pour l'emploi (ANPE), may also be a useful starting point. To go through the ANPE you need to register with them and you should usually have some kind of proof of the work-experience or skills you want to indicate on the form. The local CROUS office offers a job-finding service: all you have to do is fill in a form outlining your skills and work experience and they may be able to find something for you.

For information concerning work contracts, employment, etc. ask for a leaflet from your local CDIJ (Centre d' Information de Jeunesse). Many CDIJ offices have an office set aside for information on employment and courses on offer. They should also have counsellors who will help you. Alternatively, look in the 'Petites Annonces' section of the local and national newspapers, where jobs are advertised. Don't forget to consult the 'free' local papers where you are more likely to find local work. , e.g. FUSAC

Some universities may have a *bureau des stages* and the notice boards are usually a good way of finding or internships specific to the field of the UFR.

Some useful websites are:

[www.kapstages.com](http://www.kapstages.com)  
[www.e-loft.com](http://www.e-loft.com)  
[www.parisetudiant.com/stages.htm](http://www.parisetudiant.com/stages.htm)  
[www.lefigaroetudiant.com](http://www.lefigaroetudiant.com)  
[www.phosphore.com](http://www.phosphore.com)  
[www.fusac.fr](http://www.fusac.fr)  
[www.etudis.com](http://www.etudis.com)

When you go in search of work, whether it be a bar job or an office job, you will invariably be asked to provide them with a copy of your Curriculum Vitae. You may also be asked for a photograph. It may, therefore be a good idea to write up a CV in French before you leave. Your CV should not exceed one page A4 size, unless you have much relevant work experience or special skills that could interest the employer. A typed version is the standard in France. Manuscript copies tend to leave a bad impression. McDonalds employs a large number of students for a maximum of 19 hours a week. It's reputed to be hard labour and you earn the SMIC, but it is one of the easiest ways of finding part-time work.

If you are looking through the job section of the newspaper **DO NOT** be misled by the word *Hôtesse*. This has nothing to do with working in a restaurant or hotel. The employers are looking for women to welcome male customers into their bars or restaurants. These women are high-class escorts and are expected to flirt with men. More often than not they are expected to spend the night with them even though it is not part of their job description.

For general information on CDIJ, write to:

Centre d' Information et de Documentation Jeunesse,

101, quai Branly,  
75740 Paris Cedex 15

**Teaching English** privately is a good way to earn money; there is almost always a demand for this at universities, so try putting your advertisement on the student boards. You can also place advertisements in the local papers for about 8 euros a week. There are many people that offer English lessons but there are very few who are native English speakers. However, if you are a woman, be very careful about the kind of advert you write and if people telephone and are interested under NO circumstances invite them to your home or go to their home. It is more advisable to meet them in a public place, such as a café, so that you do not put yourself in any danger. The majority of people are genuine but there have been cases where women have been raped and there has even been one woman murdered. This is not meant to put you off teaching privately; it is simply to say that you must be vigilant.

If you do teach privately, do not be afraid of asking for the going rate. It is not advisable to undercut other people, and usually the person is prepared to pay the norm. Depending on the level of the student and your competence as a teacher, you can earn anything between 10€ and 20€ an hour. It is worth asking around before you offer any price.

One good way to improve your French, put up posters around your accommodation and University, offering an exchange of English for French lessons. A cheap way to improve your language and a good way to meet French people.

**Baby-sitting** is always a good way of earning extra pocket money and French families always seem to be keen on having International students to look after their children. Again, it is a matter of putting up notices in shop windows and consulting notice boards and newspapers, FUSAC. Otherwise contact:

Alliance Française  
101, boulevard Raspail  
75006 Paris  
Tel: 45 44 38 28

**Au Pair:** Keep an eye out for personal ads in the papers by families looking for 'foreign' girls to au pair. Or apply to the following address for further information:

Relations Internationales  
20, rue de l'Exposition  
75007 Paris  
Tel: 45 50 23 23

Accueil Familial des Jeunes Étrangers  
23, rue du Cherche-Midi,  
75006 Paris  
Tel: 42 22 50 34

Au pair work is listed in the Lady magazine and in general working holiday magazines. The following website provides further information on au pair work:  
[http://www.europa-pages.com/au\\_pair/france.html](http://www.europa-pages.com/au_pair/france.html)

**Hotel and Catering Work:** You can either go round all the hotels and restaurants in your area to enquire about jobs, (a good way to present yourself too) or else you

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may well wish to buy a copy of 'Hôtellerie', a specialist magazine published all year round which advertises jobs available. In addition, the Syndicat Général des Hôtelières will run an advertisement for you (at no cost):

Syndicat Général des Hôtelières

22, Av de la Grande Armée,

75017 Paris

Tel: 43 80 08 29

L'Hôtellerie

79, Av des Champs-Élysées

75008 Paris

Tel: 47 23 66 72

Some UK employment agencies who deal with work overseas are registered with the **Federation of Recruitment and Employment Services (FRES)**. If you write to them before you leave they may be able to help you. Their address is:

FRES

36-38 Mortimer Street, London W1N 7RB

Publications which may be useful include:

*The Directory of Jobs and Careers Abroad* (£10.95 web price)

*Teaching English Abroad* (£10.95 web price)

*The Au Pair and Nanny's Guide to Working Abroad* (£10.95 web price)

*Live and Work in France*. (£8.99 web price)

All these titles are distributed by and can be bought online from:

Vacation Work, 9 Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HJ

Tel: (01865) 241978 [www.vacationwork.co.uk](http://www.vacationwork.co.uk)

## HEALTH

The French healthcare system is different from the UK. Sort out the European health card and insurance cover before you leave the UK, providing you with automatically free medical services while you are away. It is important to realise though that, unlike in this country, prescriptions will not in general be State-subsidised, so it is wise to make sure you get any prescription medicines you may need for your year abroad from your UK doctor before you go.

**The E128 form has been replaced by the European health care card, which should be sufficient for emergency health care, the application form of which is available in all Post Offices.**

Although the card covers urgent treatment for accident or unexpected illness, the form does not cover all medical expenses, you should think about taking out additional travel insurance for the duration of your stay.

Medical treatment in France is expensive, but your private insurance will cover the full cost of any emergency. Similarly, those covered under the EU Social Security arrangements can claim from their private insurance the 25-30% contribution normally required by the French Social Security scheme towards the cost of treatment. Some French universities have their own health centre with specialists visiting on specific days. Treatment is free and you should check with your host coordinator to find out if such a service exists.

## i) ASSISTANTS

If you are an Assistant you will be covered for social security as soon as you receive a social security card with a social security number. This is either done automatically through your school or you will have to sort this out yourself. If you show your Social Security card at the chemist when picking up prescriptions then instead of paying the total cost and claiming back 75%, you just pay 25% on the spot.

As an Assistant, if you are unfortunate enough to have an accident at work, you will be insured by the school's insurance policy. If you have to take time off work because of an *Accident de Travail*, you will still be paid your normal wage. However, under such circumstances there is a strong possibility that you will be checked upon. This is done to ensure that you are not abusing the system and taking advantage of some time off to have a holiday somewhere in the sun!

## ii) TYPES

In France, medical services are not state-run and each person may choose his/her doctor, but there are two types:

- Social Security doctors who have an agreement with social security or *Caisse Primaire d'Assurance Maladie* (equivalent to the NHS); consultation fees are fixed in

agreement with the Social Security. These fees are not on a national scale. For a consultation with a general practitioner the fee should be approximately 20 euros (night calls, Sundays and holidays are more expensive). The addresses of doctors on night duty, or available Sundays and holidays can be found at police stations, on the doors of chemists and in the local papers. In case of an **emergency** phone the POLICE (number 17 on the dial) who will direct you to a hospital service.

- Doctors who do not belong to the Social Security and whose prices are generally much higher (equivalent to private doctors).

If you are unfortunate enough to be ill and need to see a doctor, ask the CROUS office to recommend one in your area. You will have to pay about 20 euros for a consultation. If you are given a prescription you will also have to pay for the medicines. Although officially the European health card can only guarantee help for emergency treatment, the definition of emergency varies in general prescriptions and fees will be part-refunded in France even if the ailment is minor. Keep all receipts for consultation and any treatment necessary and take them along to the local *Caisse Primaire d'Assurance Maladie* (Sécurité Sociale) with your health card.

You should receive about 65% of your money back for medical consultations and 40-60% of prescription costs. In order to receive the remaining amount you will have to claim from your private insurance. If you have to go to hospital, the same process applies. Dental treatment and fees are unlikely to be reimbursed and are expensive so try to avoid this kind of cost. Opticians fees are not covered by the health card.

### iii) STRESSES & STRAINS

The period after arrival abroad can be very disorientating, as you adjust to different cultures and surroundings. Problems with enrolment and accommodation, and the difficulty of making yourself understood and understanding others, may make matters worse. Many students suffer high levels of stress in their first few weeks, which can result in feelings of depression and loneliness. Fortunately, these feelings do not usually persist, at least not in an extreme form, and the long-term results of these crises are often closer friendships with other students and an improved sense of your own capabilities. Past experience suggests that after Christmas the Year Abroad adventure just gets better and better, and that by the end of the summer term you'll be sorry to leave. However, if you do find you are suffering from culture shock at first, talk to someone about it; you may well find that they have similar feelings, and you can help each other to get through it. If you need do have any problems contact the ERASMUS coordinator in your host university who should be able to put you in contact with other ERASMUS students or particularly people from your host country.

## UPON ARRIVAL

As soon as you arrive in France you may be faced with some problems with administrative registration. This is not as daunting as it first appears provided that you make photocopies of all the relevant documents required and are prepared to spend time sorting out the finer details of complicated registration forms.

For application for the Allocation Logement the Carte de Sejour is not normally required, the ERASMUS cover letter is normally sufficient.

### i) POLICE REGISTRATION

If you need a Carte de Sejour you should go to the Préfecture or Commissariat de Police in the town where you are staying to apply for one. Requirements may vary from place to place, so you may want to go there first and ask what documentation exactly they require (they have a check-list) and then come back, which will save you time and hassle. Make sure you have enough copies of all the relevant documents to make the process as easy as possible. NEVER hand over the originals.

After about two weeks you will be issued with a temporary Carte de Séjour and the real one should be ready about a month later. The Carte proves that you are French resident for a year. You are actually permitted to live in France for six months as an EU member without having one but it can make life easier.

## ACCOMODATION

**Finding accommodation in France can be a nightmare, but you just need to know where to look!**

### i) HALLS

Accommodation in University Halls is safe, saves hours of stress and guarantees you a reasonable amount of social mixing with French students. France has a relatively well established student housing system the CROUS, which is very cheap in comparison to the private sector - Although many people say that these residences are of poor standard we are happy to say that there is actually huge variation in them and many are more than comfortable. They have the additional benefit of being safe and secure as well as having no problems with regards for applying for the CAF allocation. From our experience many people have had problems in the private sector with land lords refusing to sign documents. If you have problems getting a place in the CROUS go to the International office where they should have numerous leaflets and suggestions with regards to housing. It is necessary to apply for a place in the CROUS through your University, with a request for accommodation over 3 months in duration. **DO THIS WELL BEFORE YOUR DEPARTURE TO GUARANTEE A PLACE.**

Being an International student also opens up the option of the Cite Universitaire. These also range in price according to standard of the room from anything from around 200E per month to 750E for a luxury studio apartment. The basic rooms are just as acceptable.

If staying for under a year there are places in these residences for court sejours and again are much cheaper places to stay than in the private sector., and much easier than dealing with agencies or private landlords. You can apply for a room in the Cite online.

The main advantage to living in university-managed accommodation is the price. Rents can be low but with housing benefit can also go down to half price. The monthly price also includes all bills. You will be expected to pay a deposit (caution). This must be paid before you are given your keys. If you wish to leave the Cité for any reason you must give one month's notice or you will not get your deposit back.

### ii) WEBSITES

[www.ciup.fr](http://www.ciup.fr)  
[www.crous-paris.fr](http://www.crous-paris.fr)  
[www.cnous.fr](http://www.cnous.fr)

### iii) THE CITÉ UNIVERSITAIRE

French halls of residence are basic and designed more for practicality than for comfort. Each room has its own wash area with a basin, which is curtained off from the rest of the room. There is a bed, usually with sheets and blankets provided, a chair and a desk. There is a lot of shelving and storage space and good lighting, and although they may seem very stark at a first glance, rooms can be made very comfortable.

You will probably have to provide your own pans, crockery and cutlery. These can be bought very cheaply in market, supermarkets, TATI and hardware shops.

Every corridor has a kitchen but this is really just a room with two hot plates and a sink.. Sometimes there are no fridges or tables which encourages people to eat at the Restau-U, although if you do feel you want to cook it is amazing the number of dishes you can conjure up with just two saucepans! Unless ensuite, toilets and showers are mixed. There is often a TV room or a work room in each block but otherwise socialising really has to be done in rooms or kitchens. Apart from the Restau-U there are normally no other on-site facilities except for the occasional launderette. Though the residence in Paris also has a post office, swimming pool, sports courts , library facilities, and modems provided for individual room internet access.

#### iv) LIFE IN THE CITE

Living in a Cité means that you will tend to meet more French Students and is especially good as students come from all the facultés in the town, not just the one that you are studying at. Most halls have a committee which runs social events and hall outings as well as dealing with accommodation problems and complaints. Every corridor has a cleaner, which doesn't always mean your room will be cleaned. The only problem that might occur in a Cité-U is theft from rooms that are left unlocked and the management now advise that you lock your room even if you just run along the corridor to the toilet. Our experience of the Cite has been fantastic the staff were really friendly and helpful with applications for the CAF etc. Curfews etc are pretty much unheard of, there is a 24h entrance where there is a security guard who checks that you have a valid pass. Guests are permitted (meant to give some warning with a charge 6E per night but never have!!).

#### v) LA CITE INTERNATIONALE UNIVERSITAIRE DE PARIS (CIUP)

La Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris is a Cité only for students in Paris. This Cité does not come under the Oeuvres Universitaires. It has an international house, which is used for cultural and sporting activities, and 37 residential houses in which live 5000 students of 110 different nationalities. Each residence has different statutes according to agreements made with the university and the different foundation. The Cité is only open to students, French or International, who have already completed the first cycle of their degree (2 years). Admission is one year in the first instance and can be renewed for a further 2 years. The monthly rates vary, according to the different residences, between about 200E a month to 750E according to the standard of the room. Requests for admission should be channelled through your home university from 1 April for the following university year, to the: *Service des Admissions de la Fondation Nationale, 21 boulevard Jourdan, 75014 Paris.*

Applications can also be made through their website:

The Cité can also receive university staff, research workers, doctors and artists carrying out short periods of research work, teaching or attachments. In these cases the rates are a little higher. Applications should be made between May and October at the above address.

#### vi) THE RESTAU-U

This is the University restaurant, which is also run by the CROUS and subsidised by the Government. There is usually one on the site of every Cité-U and they are open from 11.30 to 14.00 and again from 17.00 to 20.30 during the week, and at weekends one Restau-U in each town will be open. When eating at a restau-u, you are usually asked for your local student ID, without which you may be denied access. The food varies wildly from very reasonable to virtually unrecognisable but generally makes up for the lack of cooking facilities in the Cité. There is usually a choice of hot dishes, a variety of salads and snacks and croque-monsieurs as well as sweets and patisseries. Vegetarians beware though! The limited nature of the food on offer means that you may find there is very little other than a double portion of vegetables as a main course.

#### vii) OTHER TYPES OF HOUSING

**HLM (Council Housing):** Most CROUS administer a few lodgings in HLM (more than 120,000 beds). Prices are around 130€ for a single person and 200€ for a couple. These prices vary according to the region, the site, and the standard offered. The MNEF (Mutuelle nationale des étudiants de France) also has a few lodgings in HLM for single and married students. NB: in an HLM you may have to pay rates.

**Hostels:** Hostels are often for women and managed by charitable associations. Many are denominational but welcome students of all religions (and also young workers). Some offer full board or half board, others only bed and breakfast. On request the CROUS can supply (like the CIDJ, Centres d'information et de documentation jeunesse) the addresses of the principal hostels. Alternatively the Bureau d'Aide Social de la Mairie will be able to give you a list.

**Private Accommodation:** If you are intending to live in private accommodation during your year abroad, you must aim to arrive in your host university town as early as possible. Watch out for agency fees! Housing for students is a great problem in France and hoping to find somewhere the day before term starts is unrealistic. First of all you have to consider the options for private accommodation and the costs involved.

**Renting a private flat or studio:** The French have created a trend for living alone in rented studios. These are self-contained one-bedroom flats with kitchen, bathroom and living space. During the summer these are easily available so there should be no problem finding somewhere to live on your own. If you are intending to share a flat with a friend and you are both looking, then you may have more difficulty. Any more than a three-bedroom apartment is almost impossible to find. It is also worth remembering when planning your departure date that most

accommodation is not furnished and although the basics can be bought cheaply and easily second hand, you may not wish to have this extra expense and worry hanging over your head. You should check with the landlord/lady if you are liable for the *Taxe d'Habitation*, which is the equivalent to our Council Tax. When renting in the private sector you will probably need to call the EDF (electricity) and arrange for a meeting with someone to read the meter as they do not operate an electricity-card system. Make sure to find out whether or not your bills are covered in your rent.

**Newspaper advertisements:** Firstly you should read all the notices on the boards both at the Fac and at the CROUS office as people often keep on their student accommodation over the summer and rent it out in the autumn. You should also keep an eye out in the local papers but these flats/studios are snapped up very quickly and you have to get to a phone literally seconds after the paper has come out to have any joy at all. It is a good idea to get a French person to phone for you, as some landlords/ladies can be very abrupt when they discover you are not French. However, it isn't impossible to find accommodation through the newspapers, and if you are patient and spend enough time looking, then invariably you will find what you are looking for, at a considerably cheaper price than if you go through an agency. In Paris, for example, you may find ads in the daily newspapers and FUSAC (found in most internet cafes and online) of people offering free accommodation in exchange for some hours weekly of babysitting or company.

The prospect of wading through advertisements may seem a little daunting at first, especially when you pick up a paper and are faced with a list of incomprehensible descriptions. However, do not be put off by the lists of abbreviations. The general consensus is for advertisers to write as little as possible since they pay by the letter. You will therefore, come across many different variations of the same description: For example, you may see *Chauffage Centrale Gaz* written as *CCgaz*, *Chauf.gaz* or *Ch.gaz*. There may be certain expressions that you are not familiar with, so the glossary below should be of some help. It is by no means exhaustive but aims at providing the most essential information.

#### viii) GLOSSARY OF NEWSPAPER TERMS

*A saisir* - This is usually an agency expression meaning that the accommodation in question is a good deal.

*B-cher* - An allotted area of private storage space which can be anything from a small cupboard somewhere within the property to the use of a large basement downstairs.

*Cšde Bail (cde bail)* - Most contracts are strictly for one year, and as a student coming from abroad for about nine months you may not want to pay rent for a whole year. It is, therefore, not a bad idea to look for an apartment where it says *cšde bail*. This means that for whatever reason, the existing tenant wants to give up the year long contract mid-way through its duration. In order not to lose money they are looking for someone to take over their contract for the remaining period.

*Chauffage collectif (Chauf. coll)/Chauffage indępendant (Chauf. Ind.)*

*Chauffage indępendant* means that you have private control of your heating, and you can decide when you turn it on and off. If it is *collectif* then it is controlled from one

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central point in the building and there will a specific date during the year when the system is turned on for the winter and off for the summer. It may also mean that you do not deal directly with the electricity board.

*Cuisine équipée / aménagée (cuis. équip / amén.)*

A kitchen of this sort will usually include a sink, fridge, hot plates or an oven, as well as the cupboards. Obviously, this is the bare minimum and it isn't impossible to find fully-fitted kitchens with all mod cons. A kitchen that is not équipée will have nothing in it. It will often be an empty room with a sink and, if you are lucky, will include some storage cupboards.

*HB* - This is written next to the telephone number and means Heures Bureaux. You can, therefore, contact the person during office hours which are from 9-12 and 2-4 or 5pm.

*Kitchenette (kitch.)/Coin Cuisine (c.cuis)* - Instead of a separate room, the kitchen is in the corner of a room with a sink, hot plates, cupboard space and possibly a fridge. These are usually found in a studio flat or an FI.

*Particulier (part.)* - A landlord who is letting out a property may put this in the advertisement to show that it is a private let. This is written so that people know that it is not an agency advertisement. Some people prefer private landlords to agencies since they deal with the landlord on a one-to-one basis; there is no middleman.

*Résidence (rés.)* - This is usually a modern apartment block.

*Standing* - If this appears after the word appartement or résidence it means that it is in a prestigious area or apartment block, which often means an affluent one too.

*Toutes Charges Comprises (TCC, cc, ch.comp.)* - This means that charges are included in the rent. Do not, however, mistake charges for bills. If TCC is written in the advert it does not mean that all bills are included in the rent. When you rent a flat, there are extra costs incurred by the tenant which go towards the upkeep of the building, car parking facilities, the concierge (if there is one), the central heating system if it is a collective one etc. This is an obligatory monthly payment which is either included, or in addition to the stated monthly rent. If charges are not included, you may see something like 2400F+charges. These costs vary, so find out exactly how much they are. If in doubt, always check whether the amount quoted is with or without these extra costs. It could make a significant difference to your budget.

*Tout Confort (tt conf.)* - This is a promotional expression, which people use if they feel that their accommodation is above average and a pleasant place to live. It is roughly equivalent of 'all mod cons' in English.

The size of an apartment is often quoted in metres squared, which includes all floor space. Below is a very rough guideline for a simple flat or studio for one person.

20m<sup>2</sup> or less = small

50m<sup>2</sup> or more = large

30-50m<sup>2</sup> = average-to-large

ix) GENERAL GUIDELINES

Remember, all accommodation is unfurnished unless otherwise stated!

*Chambre meublée* - This can be a room in a shared house but more often than not is a room in a private household. Arrangements for cooking and washing vary according to the hospitality of the family.

*Studio* - One room with a coin cuisine where the bathroom may be in another corner or a separate room.

*F1* - One bedroom with a private kitchen and bathroom.

*F2* - The same as an *F1* but with one extra room, either a bedroom or a living room.

*F3* - As *F1* with two extra rooms and an *F4* is with three extra rooms and so on.

You often see the letter 'T' instead of 'F' which usually indicates that the accommodation has either recently been renovated (*refait neuf*) or it is situated in a modern building.

If you're set on renting on your own, but newspapers are unsuccessful, then you will have to go to an agency. You will be guaranteed to find something this way but most agencies will not even let you see a list of available lodgings until you have paid them a fee which can be anything between £20 and £90. Do not forget that on top of this fee, the agency will probably also ask for one or two months' rent in advance plus one month's rent to act as the deposit.

If you do intend to go to an agent then ask at the CROUS office for a list of reliable ones! When you do see something that you like, remember to ask the following questions:

- What is the rent and what does it include? e.g. services. Bills and rates are sometimes included in the price.
- When is the rent due and how should it be paid?
- What notice should be given by either party?  
NB In France a tenant cannot legally be evicted from lodgings between the months of November and May.
- How much is the deposit?
- Are you entitled to Housing Benefit?
- Do you have to take out house insurance? This is compulsory in France and is usually the responsibility of the tenant. If anything goes wrong in the house or flat, it is the tenant's responsibility. Without house insurance it could prove very costly.

**NB: It is strongly advisable to have a written contract confirming all the terms of the tenancy agreement not only for your own protection but also to receive Aide au Logement.**

x) OTHER LODGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

**Lodging with a family or with French students:** In either of these cases you should keep an eye out for notices at the Fac, CROUS, in local papers, shops or by asking for advice at the Accueil des Étudiants Étrangers. Usually you will pay rent as normal although if you wish to eat with the family too you will of course have to pay more. In rare cases International students can live free in these situations by giving conversation lessons to a member of the household or family. BEWARE, many of these set-ups are there for people to make money, so expect to be treated like a lodger for the most part, rather than part of the family. This is often seen as a business arrangement, so restrictions on water and kitchen use often apply. Guests might also pose a problem, so check before moving in if payment is expected, or if it is even allowed.

**Flat-Shares:** There are many websites available advertising rooms for rent in apartments or houses. It is often a cheaper way to live, and a good way to immerse yourself in the language by living with other French people. BEWARE; always check out the places first, taking a friend along with you to make sure it is an environment where you will feel safe. Some of these websites require a fee to unlock phone numbers and e-mail information.

[www.colocation.fr](http://www.colocation.fr)  
[www.appartager.com](http://www.appartager.com)  
[www.appartement.org](http://www.appartement.org)  
[www.kel-koloc.fr](http://www.kel-koloc.fr)  
[www.portail-colocation.com](http://www.portail-colocation.com)  
[www.seloger.com](http://www.seloger.com)

**Rent:** Depending on the area and quality of accommodation you should be looking at paying between 150€ and 600€ per month. If you are entitled to housing benefit then you should receive about 100 euros towards each month's rent. It is usually calculated on a sliding scale, so the more you pay in rent, the greater your benefit allocation will be.

**Housing Insurance:** In France the law states that if you rent a private apartment or studio then you must take out an insurance policy to protect yourself against any damage to the property. The most basic and cheapest form protects you against fire and flood damage but there are other more comprehensive policies. Your normal insurance policy will not cover this. Two insurance companies gave quotations for their housing insurance:

**L'A.G.E.M.** -20€ up front for basic cover and then 6€ for each room that is larger than 9m by 9m. **L'M.N.E.F.** - 17€ for a room in the Cité-U per year; 32€ for a private room or studio per year; 60€ for a private apartment. These prices include cover against theft and damage to personal belongings. NB In the Cité-U you are not obliged to take out housing insurance

**Landlord Disputes:** In the unlikely event of dispute with a landlord or housing agency, the following organisation can provide information regarding your rights as a tenant:

Confederation Nationale Du Logement  
62, Bld Richard Lenoir  
75011 Paris  
Tel. (1) 48 57 04 64

xi) HOUSING BENEFITS

This is not as bad as everyone makes out, and if done as soon as your accommodation is sorted out, your first payment can be with you in 3 weeks. To apply for housing benefit, you must go along to your nearest Caisse d'Allocation Familiale (CAF) office. Fill out an application online first, and this form can then be printed off for presentation at your nearest office. [www.caf.fr](http://www.caf.fr)

- Here you must present:

Proof of Address - the official contract or letter from the landlord/lady is necessary, a receipt will not be enough. It must have the amount of rent you are charged and the dates that you will be living there marked clearly on it. Proof of Student Status and proof of student loan /ERASMUS grant. Details of your French bank account, Photocopy of passport or birth certificate, A CAF form, which your landlord will need to complete, stating the exact details of the property.

If you are an Assistant you are also entitled to housing benefit. The system is a little different and it would be best to find out all the details from your local CAF.

Once you have done this you must wait for several weeks. Back-payment for any months that you have lived in your accommodation without receiving Aide au Logement will be paid directly into your account, and then each month's rebate will be paid in after that. You should expect between 75 and 150€ per month but do not rely on this when you are looking at renting a flat/studio because it is not guaranteed. You will not receive Allocation for the first month's rent and back-payment is generally limited to three months before the application. It is therefore advisable to apply for Allocation Logement as soon as you arrive in France.

## THE FRENCH UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

There are now over 75 universities in France, 17 of which are in Paris. As everybody in France has the right to go to university once they have taken and passed their Baccalauréat, most major towns have a university with at least an Arts or Science faculty and usually Law and Political Science. The norm is that most French will go to university after school to gain some kind of qualification because there are no specific entrance requirements. This means that as well as being grossly overcrowded, French educational establishments are highly competitive and students who fall behind are not allowed to continue with their studies after their first set of exams in January. The lack of a selection system also means that, apart from making a provisional application to the university of your choice (in 99% of cases this is the university nearest to your home town), places in courses are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. It really is survival of the fittest, so be warned.

A French student's academic career is divided into three "Cycles":

**Première Cycle:** A two-year course leading to a national diploma, the Diplôme d'Études Universitaires Générales DEUG. **Deuxième Cycle:** A two-year course, the first leading to a Licence (roughly equivalent to the BA) and the second to the Maîtrise (equivalent to MA). **Troisième Cycle:** This is for advanced research studies. After one year a student may obtain a *Diplôme d'Études Supérieures Spécialisées* (DESS) or a *Diplôme d'Études Approfondies* (DEA). The completion of this cycle results in a *Doctorat*.

In each of the first and second cycles, students decide on their subject and department, known as *Unités de Formations et de Recherches* (UFRs) and choose three *Unités de Valeur* (UV's) from all those which are on offer in their UFR and two UV libres from another department of their choice.

Teaching is either by *Travaux dirigés* or *Travaux pratiques* which are classed as seminars and by *Cours Magistraux* which are lectures. Attendance of these is essential, as the notes tend to make up for the shortage of books. The term "seminar" is, however, misleading as there can be between 40 and 100 people in each class and written work is more rarely set than in England, tutors preferring to monitor progress by exams which are set twice a year, and exposés (presentations). Other than that there is little teacher-student contact by British standards but don't be fooled - attendance is carefully monitored and more than two absences can result in disqualification from the course.

Before you can attend any classes at all, you are required to register with the university - twice. The first enrolment is Administrative and the second Academic.

### i) ADMINISTRATIVE ENROLMENT

Most of the host universities will already have received some kind of preliminary application from either you or the International and Study Abroad and they will definitely be expecting you to arrive, so this process is much easier for International students than for French nationals, believe it or not! Most Universities have an **Accueil des Étudiants Étrangers**, which will help you with this process. If you are an Erasmus student make sure you get some sort of proof from them of this - it will ease the way for later enrolment procedures. All you have to do is make sure that you have all the correct documentation listed below. Every French university is different so use common sense and bring with you copies of any other documents that you think you may need.

**You must provide:**

**N.B:** Although photocopying is generally cheaper in France, it is highly recommended that you get everything done *before* you leave, as it will save you a lot of time and stress!

1. **An Attestation of two years study at your University**, which will be given to you by home co-ordinator. You will need two photocopies.
2. Your original **Birth Certificate**.
3. (European Health Card) and other proof of insurance. Medical Students need to provide proof of protection with either MPS or MDU, both of which are free. This document is essential to have.
4. **Proof of Address:** a housing contract, letter from your landlord/lady or receipt will do. If you have a room in halls then you will need a copy of your contract with the CROUS office.
5. **Proof of Identity** (i.e.; passport, UK University registration card).
6. **4 Passport Photographs**.

ii) ACADEMIC ENROLMENT
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On arrival, you should try to make an appointment with your academic co-ordinator for advice regarding study-plans, courses and methods of assessment; this also makes academic enrolment more clear a process for you. This enrolment is compulsory for the validation of any exams. You have to queue up to enrol at the main office of your chosen UFR. From there you can also buy the prospectus (**Fascicule**) of courses and a break down of each UV. Ask for a **polycopie** in each one of your modules, which contain lecture handouts. You will be required to enrol for each UV separately. The fascicule should also tell you where and when to enrol for your chosen course. If this information is not given then it will be up to you to keep an eye on the notice boards for your UFR to find out the time and place of enrolment.

When you do come to enrol for each UV you will notice, probably for the first time, just how overcrowded the universities really are. Sometimes it will be a question of queuing to sign your name on a list, which may take a few hours so it is best to arrive as early as possible to guarantee a place and a quick escape; otherwise you may be given a time and a lecture theatre for a meeting and everyone will make their applications together. If you miss these appointments it is very difficult to be accepted on the courses without writing to the professor in charge and stating your case, without a Pigeon Hole system for staff or pupils this is often quite fruitless.

On the application form for each UV you will be asked to give the code of the course that you are enrolling for, which can be found in the relevant fascicule. You will also be asked what other UVs you are taking and the title of your diploma e.g. "**Lettres Modernes**". It is very helpful here to state that you are an ERASMUS exchange student because many teachers see you as a bonus to the class and less of a burden on him/her for marking etc. This again seems very complicated and pointless to those of us who have been spoiled by personal tutors and UCAS forms but once you have done it a couple of times it won't seem so bad and it's a great way to meet French friends who will be moaning about the system just as hard as you!

### iii) STUDENT SERVICES

Unlike British students, the French do not regard university and social life as synonymous. In France, there is no equivalent of the Students' Union as we know it. The coffee bars and the Restau-U are purely functional. Get information booklets from the ERASMUS office regarding sports, and academic club information. There is bound to be an Anglo-French society where you will meet friendly people who are more than willing to take you on. Also, with Sport being increasingly offered as an UV option, sporting clubs are quite popular and you can do anything from Martial Arts to Rugby. Bear in mind though that student sports services are usually offered during the day, which can pose problems with timetable clashes especially in big cities. You also have to be very careful about missing training sessions or not going to the assigned hours without giving notice to the person in charge. As places are limited you may find yourself losing yours for someone on the waiting list. NB A medical certificate is required to state that you are fit to play sports. You have to pay for this in France, so get one in the UK before you leave if possible.

Find out when each faculty organises their own social events. Despite the belief that French students do not have the same social life as British students, you don't have to look very far. Also, there are weekly ERASMUS parties organised at local clubs, [www.erasmusbynight.net](http://www.erasmusbynight.net)

Unfortunately, there is not a great deal of student support at most universities in France. There is a distinct lack of student services available, and if there are any, you normally have to pay for them. Ask in the International Relations office or the ERASMUS office for help with accommodation. The CROUS website also has many areas of helpful advice. The services available will depend on the size of the university, but there is usually a health centre, which provides cheap condoms each as well as a service called **Médecine Préventive**. They offer free AIDS tests, free medical tests and free inoculations.

You will also find that most towns have offices dedicated to the welfare of students and many of these organise activities and excursions to interesting places. Go along to your local CROUS office or the **Espace Jeunesse** or find out about student organisations and offices that will put you in touch with other students who share your interests. A very useful website with info on almost everything concerning student life is: [www.studyrama.com](http://www.studyrama.com) .

iv) MATURE STUDENTS

The only problems that might occur with being older than the average student are administrative. If you obtained entrance to university by doing an access course then you must have the certificate officially translated or stamped by your home university. If you are over the age of 26 you may be told that your E128 is not sufficient for medical cover on your year abroad, but this may have changed with the European Health card. Provided you and all your dependants are named on it and you are an EU national then there should be no problem but you may like to check with the place of issue or the National Insurance Contributions Office in Newcastle before you leave the UK. Student discounts also tend to be only for the under 26s on public transport but showing some kind of student ID will gain you cheaper entrance to most museums and the theatre/cinema.

v) TERM DATES

**Students:** These usually follow the school dates, although the universities have less time off in total. There is always a break of about two weeks for Christmas (warning, might be less for medical/veterinary/dental students). There is a two-week holiday at the end of February so that everyone can go skiing, you may even find yourself ending up having three if you do not take exams since the introduction of **contrôle continu**. At Easter there are another two weeks of holiday. The academic year is usually divided into two semesters, the first lasting until late January when exams usually take place, the second finishing at the end of May and usually followed by end-of-year exams.

**Assistants:** As you will be working for the **Education Nationale** you will get more time off than the exchange students. There is a break for one week at the end of October or beginning of November for Le Toussaint, two weeks at Christmas, two weeks at the end of February, two weeks at Easter and possibly a further week for Pentecost.

Term dates and hence holiday dates vary around France depending on what zone of the country you live in, but this information is easily obtained. The SNCF has a list of the school holidays in its brochures.

There are a great number of **jours fériés** in France, especially in the spring. Everything is usually closed on these days but the large stores in main towns are often open. However, on May 1st, National Labour Day, it is very rare to find anybody working. In some towns there are not even any bus services.

vi) LIBRARIES

The library system is slightly different than in Britain and space isn't as readily available and they can be much noisier. There are several reasons for this, though the major factor is of course the high student population and the lack of resources to cater for them all. The result of this is that taking books out of the library can be tricky. Unlike your home University library there probably won't be an elaborate library computer system with many search terminals.

There is sometimes a small selection of popular English reference books available to hand but for the most part to find the book that you are looking for you may have to search.. You are allowed to take between three and ten books out at a time and you may keep them for up to three weeks but of course this will vary from university to university. Inter-library loans are possible so ask at the information desk. The main library is a good place to work, with huge rooms full of tables open to students. However, these do get terribly busy - and sometimes noisy - during the day and the library shuts at the same time as lessons finish. Some university libraries are also open on a Saturday morning. In the better-stocked libraries, cassettes and videotapes are also available.

The good news is that most UFRs have their own departmental libraries and they are generally quieter than the main library. However, you have to have membership to use them and you are still not allowed to browse through the books; you have to ask a librarian to help you. At some universities you may not even be able to take books out of these specialised libraries and may have to ask for permission.

If you are really desperate for a book, most towns have a FNAC shop, which offers a 5% discount on study books and tutors at the university often order course books in bulk from there so they should be readily available. If you want to buy second hand books, try and look for Gibert Jeune or Gibert Joseph in Paris and some of the bigger cities.

If your university is lucky enough, it may have its own **Videothèque** where you can go and watch films in VO (*Version Original*). There is a designated room, which receives satellite television and has a number of televisions and video-recorders that are at your disposal.

**Local Libraries:** Local libraries are not nearly as well-stocked with academic books as the universities are, but they are nevertheless worth joining, not only to allow you a greater quota of books but also for their often excellent reference facilities. As well as providing the town with general reading materials, the good libraries will have a large variety of newspapers and journals. It is often worth enquiring about its exact resources, especially if you have difficulty getting hold of up-to-date periodicals.

In most regional capitals, the municipal library is an excellent resource for academic books with its special 'reference' section: all you need is to do is to leave some kind of document or proof of identity at the desk. In this 'reference' section you do not have direct access to the books; the system is much like the university one but in this case you can take out as many books as you like to refer to at a given time, although you cannot take books home. The municipal libraries often have a record library and also offer an excellent film-video section with borrowing facilities. There are even rooms for groups of people wishing to watch the same film. Some libraries also have a stock of audio language courses with a range of different languages that you can learn. Obviously, the facilities will vary from town to town but it is definitely worth seeking out all the resources available, as you will probably not always be satisfied with the university. Be prepared though as access to books is often more limited than in the UK and you may have to search through index cards, requesting a specific book as opposed to browsing.

**Consulate/American Libraries:** If you have a British Consulate office in your town, or perhaps an American Cultural Centre/library, they are both worth consulting, especially if you are looking for English books. A small fee may be requested on joining these libraries.

**National Archives:** The largest and best-known national libraries are concentrated for the most part in Paris. One of the best known is of course the **Bibliothèque Publique d'Information du Centre Georges Pompidou**, in Paris. Here 400,000 books are kept on all subjects and there are 1,300 seats for students to study at; you will find videos, records, cassettes, special language labs, specialist journals, and every daily newspaper printed in France. It is open to everyone and it is free.

At the Bibliothèque Nationale, 50, rue Richelieu, 75001 Paris (tel: 47.03.81.26), you will find copies of almost all the newspapers printed since François 1<sup>er</sup> and an impressive collection of first editions and manuscripts. Unfortunately, access to this library is limited to students in the troisième cycle (see the *Guide Pratique de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Z798, reference book, for more specific details on the library).

A French student will need a *carte d'étudiant en thèse* or a certificate from his/her research supervisor in order to be given access for research purposes. International students will need to have either a letter from their Embassy or letter from the 'Service Culturel' of a French Embassy/Consulate; alternatively, they should present a letter from a tutor explaining their reasons for research to the directors of the library itself.

**General Points on Libraries in France:** For admission in nearly all libraries and archives, researchers are required to present a passport for identification purposes and usually some kind of scholarly credentials either from a supervisor or a dean of a department bearing the seal of the university. An introduction from a Professor at a French university is probably the most useful of all. The Cultural Attachés of your Embassy/Consulate can also provide a letter of introduction.

Upon presentation of the appropriate documents, the library will usually issue some sort of card. You may also need a signed passport photo for this. Once admitted, you will be treated like any other French researcher.

If you wish to join a municipal library all you will need is a 'justificatif de résidence' to prove that you live in the town. You can get this from your landlord or your Carte de Séjour might be enough if your address is written on it. You may possibly also need some official identification and you may be asked to pay a small fee.

NB: Some advisors stress the importance of the word *chercheur* in library jargon, recommending that in all cases you provide yourself with a letter of recommendation from your research supervisor, preferably referring to you by that term. Many specialised collections are open only to those defined as *chercheurs*.

**Specialist Libraries:** It is impossible to give an exhaustive list of all the libraries and research centres available for consultation in France. Below are some national and university libraries, which may be of interest to you. If you are looking for a library specialising in a particular area, it is worth consulting your home university library for a directory of all the libraries in the country and their area of interest. Alternatively, for information concerning the above, write to or phone:

Cellule Accueil-Information-Orientation,  
90, rue de Tolbiac,  
75834 Paris, Cedex 13  
Tel: 40.77.18.36.

Below is only a very modest sample of what is available in France:

**La Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal**

which specialises in the performing arts and in literature.  
1, rue Sully, 75004 Paris. Tel: 42.72.19.09.

**La Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris**

for a history of the capital.  
Hotel Lamoignon 24 Pavée, 75004 Paris. Tel: 42.74.44.44.

**La Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand**

for feminism and women's history.  
21, Place du Panthéon, Paris 56me. Tel: 43.26.85.05.

**La Bibliothèque Sainte Geneviève**

10, Place du Panthéon, Paris. Tel: 43.29.61.00.

**La Bibliothèque du C.N.R.S. (Centre national de la recherche scientifique)**

59, rue Pouchet, 75017 Paris. Tel: 42.63.27.00.

**La Bibliothèque du Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers**

292, rue saint Martin, 75003 Paris. Tel: 42.71.24.14.

**La Documentation Française**

has a press library (i.e collections of press cuttings from a wide range of press sources) which deals with international affairs.  
29-31, Quai Voltaire, 75344 Paris. Tel: 40.15.70.00

**BIPA - Banque d'Information Politique et Actualité**

is the Press Library which deals with French domestic politics.  
8 Av de l'Opéra, Paris. Tel: 42.96.14.22, open Mon-Fri 14.30 - 17.30

**INSEE L'Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economique**

for statistical information.  
18, Bld Adolphe Pinare, Paris.  
Website: [www.insee.fr](http://www.insee.fr)

### **Institut d'Etudes Politiques**

Book library only for use of *science-pol* students.

Excellent for press and periodicals but restricted to students preparing dissertations or theses. Ask your tutor for a letter of introduction which means you can buy a ticket for entry for visits. It has an excellent cross-reference system and they also provide an 'abstract' of each article to give you an idea of what it is about.

Website: [www.chez.com.bibelec](http://www.chez.com.bibelec)

### **La Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine**

specialises in International Relations during the twentieth century, the history of World War I and II and the history of Europe between the wars; other areas include: USSR, USA and Middle East and the history of the Working Class Movement.

BDIC, Centre universitaire, 6, allée de l'Université, 92001 Nanterre. Tel: 40.97.79.00.

### **Fichier National des Thèses at Nanterre University**

(Paris X) offers a national collection of doctoral theses completed in French universities in the following subjects: law, economics, business studies, arts and humanities, human sciences and theology. The library does not have the theses on the premises but has all the information on the theses: name of the author, type of doctorate etc. You can either consult the information on the premises or you could write to them with enquiries at the following address:

Fichier National des Thèses, Université de Paris X - Nanterre,  
200, avenue de la République, 92001 Nanterre Cedex. Tel: 40.97.79.00.

If you do wish to write, it is important that you specify the subject, discipline, keywords etc. which relate to your studies. The first 10 references are *free*. 20 references cost 30F; over 20 will cost 30F plus 1 F for each additional reference.

### **CARAN (Centre d'Accueil et de Recherche des Archives Nationales**

11 rue des Quatre Fils, Paris, is France's major storehouse of governmental records and public administration documents, to which you can also refer if you are in need of information particularly on provincial archives. Admission is by *carte de lecteur*, which is issued at the bureau d'accueil on presentation of passport and attestation of your status as *chercheur*.

**Books on libraries in France:** There are several reference books available, which give information about all the different libraries in France:

- *Libraries and Archives in France: a handbook* E.K Welsh, 1979
- An excellent index section allows the student to find libraries in his/her particular field, details of library facilities, services, admission requirements and opening times, though most libraries are Paris-based.
- *Bibliothèques et Archives: Comment se documenter?* A. Chanleur, 1980.
- *Libraries in France* J. Ferguson, 1971.
- *Libraries in Paris: a student's guide* L.M Newman.

**Language Classes:** You will find out from your host University in the UK who you need to contact at your University in France with regards to French language classes.

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Make sure you contact this person before you leave to find out when the language test will be. Don't worry, the test only acts to place you in a class of an adequate level.

Watch out also for conversation classes, the Cite-U residences may have a language centre that offers free conversation classes. Most University libraries also cater for foreign students and will provide access to lots of learning materials.

## TRAVEL IN FRANCE

## i) BY TRAIN

The French have a very up-to-date and efficient railway system. Trains are, by our standards, spotlessly clean, very comfortable and rarely late! Unfortunately services to smaller towns are not always direct and sometimes the simplest journey can involve lots of changes and waiting around. The price of the ticket is measured on a kilometric scale so a return ticket is double the price of a single. For up-to-date information on timetables and fares check the SNCF website on [www.sncf.fr](http://www.sncf.fr). If you travel a lot by train in France, it is advisable to buy the 'Carte 12-25' which will cost 49 euros, giving you between 25-50% off rail tickets. (See below)

**BEWARE!** Before departure you must validate your ticket by using the dating and numbering machines (composteur) in all stations. If you do not do this the ticket controller on the train will fine you. If you want to be sure of a seat you should make a reservation. The cost of reserving a seat is approximately 5€.

**Couchettes:** If you travel by night you may wish to book a couchette. If you want to book a sleeper the supplement is from 40€ to 130€ depending on the standard of accommodation.

**TGV:** takes 1st and 2nd class passengers and the same reductions are available as on other trains. However, at peak hours there is a supplement according to the distance. Reservations are compulsory.

A restaurant service is to be found on most major trains.

If you wish to book a ticket or reserve a seat in advance, you can do so by calling your local SNCF station or, alternatively, you can use the Minitel at any large post office; just put in the code: 36 15 or 36 16 plus the code SNCF or punch in directly the number 36 26 50 50 and you will be able to consult the timetables and prices and order a ticket up to 2 months in advance. This service is available from 05.00-23.45, seven days a week.

(NB: If you do reserve tickets by this method then make sure that you pay within the given time, otherwise the reservation will be automatically cancelled).

In case of change of plans, whether you are going by an ordinary train or by the TGV, you can change the date and seat reservation of your trip. In the case of cancellation you may ask for full reimbursement at the station. If you have made a reservation and wish to be reimbursed after the train has left then 20% or a sum of 20€ will be deducted from your reimbursement. The tickets will no longer be refundable after you have begun the journey. (For an international ticket you may only be reimbursed at the station where you bought your ticket).

**Billetterie automatique** is a useful way of obtaining a ticket if you are in a hurry and there are queues at the ticket office. Just select your destination and the

number of tickets and reservations desired. You can pay by cash or credit card. These machines are also a useful way of obtaining information about train fares and timetables if the queue is too long at the ticket office.

**Discounts:** SNCF (French Railways) divide the week up into red, white and blue periods. Red times are usually Friday afternoons and all day Saturday; white days are Sundays and Monday mornings and the rest of the week is a blue period unless there are school or public holidays, in which case, most of the weekend becomes a white period. Ticket prices and discounts vary according to the colour. For students, which in this case unfortunately means under 25s, the following deals are available:

**Carte 12-25:** This is similar to the "Carte Carrissimo" (described below) and can be purchased from French Railways in Piccadilly Circus in London (opposite Fortman and Mason) or online [www.sncf.fr](http://www.sncf.fr). It costs around £30 and is valid for a year. It entitles you to 50% off all fares, except TGV during blue periods and 25% off during white periods. The "Carte" is well worth the money as you will easily make your money back after a few long trips. For example, it gives you Eurostar return tickets for about £49 (London-Paris) and you might even pay as little as £17 for promotional offers around Christmas.

**Carrissimo:** This is the most popular deal among students under 25 and gives you a 50% reduction on blue period days and 20% on white days. On red days the deal is not available.

You must buy four or eight journeys' worth of Carrissimo reduction at a fixed price and buy your discounted ticket on top of this. The first journey will probably not be much cheaper than full fare, but the next tickets you buy will be discounted.

Look out for special promotions on Carrissimo tickets at the beginning of term; the SNCF often gives a deal for new students. If you are travelling with friends you can buy 4 or 8 journeys between you and all benefit from the reduction.

NB: One Carrissimo journey is worth one single ticket to your destination and is not valid in the Parisian suburbs.

**Billet BIGE:** BIGE tickets entitle you to reductions of up to 25% according to the country, for journeys from France to other countries, on specified trains on particular days. If you are spending your year split between France and another country, you may find it both cheaper and more convenient to use this method when travelling between the two, (especially where there is no direct air link). If you choose this method of travel then you may also wish to send your extra baggage by rail freight. To do this, enquire at your local SNCF; this is an inexpensive method of sending luggage in advance of your departure date. BIGE tickets can be bought from travel agents in towns or the SNCF station. The requirements are that you are under 26 and a student.

NB: Carrissimo and BIGE tickets are valid on the TGV but the usual reservation fee must still be paid.

**Other Discounts:** If you travel in a group of between 6 and 24 people you can get a reduction of 20% of the full price of a ticket in 1st or 2nd class. For a group of 25

people or more, the reduction increases to 30%. A reservation in these two cases is obligatory.

You can travel with a reduction in 2nd class travel to up to 400 destinations within France and abroad. There is no age limit. The only requirement is that you reserve your ticket in advance. The more in advance you reserve it, the greater the reduction.

There are two types of Prix Joker: Joker8 and Joker30. **Joker8** is applicable if you reserve between 8 and 30 full days before the date of your departure, you benefit from up to 40% reduction. **Joker30**: If you reserve between 30 and 60 full days before the date of your departure, you benefit from up to 60% reduction. However, the ticket is only valid on the train that you book and you cannot exchange your ticket or get a refund if you decide to take a different train. Also, they are only valid on direct trains.

**Abonnement de travail:** If you are an Assistant, and therefore *salarié* and you travel to work by train, you are entitled to up to 75% off your travel to and from work. The only limitations are that your workplace has to be less than 75km from your home and you can only buy tickets valid for one week or one month. For full information, apply to the railway stations or ask for the "*Guide des prix réduits*".

## ii) THE UNDERGROUND

Underground systems now exist in Marseille, Lyon, Lille and Toulouse as well as in Paris. On the Paris métro, a one-price rate is applied whatever the length of the journey in zones 1 & 2. The introduction of the *carte orange* (cost 50 euros for zones 1&2, equivalent of about 5 carnets – worth it if travelling to and from a given destination everyday) allows you, by buying a monthly or annual ticket, to travel freely by bus or tube in the Paris transport area. Since the introduction of the *carte orange*, there are no more special reductions for students in the Paris area but the weekly ticket remains valid for a fixed journey. If you want to buy a year long metro and bus ticket at 300euros its well worth it "Navigo", ask for a form as soon as you arrive as it may take up to three weeks for it to be ready ([www.imagine-r.com](http://www.imagine-r.com)).

## iii) BY BUS

An advantage of the French bus system is that one ticket will give you unlimited travel within the town. There is a time limit for each ticket, which is usually an hour, but can vary depending on the size of the town. Unfortunately, buses tend to stop very early in the evenings (between 8pm and 9pm), although there is often a limited night bus service. There are buses on Sundays but again they are few in number.

Students can usually buy *carnets* of tickets at half price or less by applying for a special discount card at the head office of the local bus company or by showing student ID. Tickets can be bought in advance from Tabacs. If you are in a town where there is a Metro system, bus and metro tickets are usually interchangeable.

Just as you must stamp your train ticket, so you must validate your bus ticket as you get on the bus by having it stamped by a machine. Plain-clothes inspectors frequently

check to see if you have done this and will fine of up to 30euros you if you haven't, even if you have a ticket.

Note that in France the SNCF has a monopoly on long-distance travel and there is NO national coach service as an alternative. The only coach service that exists is a departmental service where coaches travel out to the villages and towns in the region. They are infrequent and few in number. Go to your local *Gare Routière* to find out times. There are usually bus services between the town and the local airport. The reason for this lack of public transport is that most French people travel by car. Daily life revolves around the car, and without one, it often proves difficult to get around. If you have the opportunity to take a car with you to France, you will find travelling much easier.

NB, always travel with a valid ticket, ignorance of the language will not get you out of paying a fine.

#### iv) BY TRAM

Grenoble city has an excellent tram service, that covers the whole town. Tickets cost 1euro20 per trip or a monthly student card of 20euros which can be recharged in Tabacs, Tram offices or in the automatic ticket machines. Again be careful to always validate your ticket in the automatic machines before getting on the tram as if you get caught expect a fine of 50euros!!

#### v) HITCHING

It is illegal to hitch hike on motorways in France. However, there are ways of getting around this problem with Allostop. This is a national organisation running a car-share system. It has offices in Paris at 8 rue Rochambeau (tel: 01.53.20.4.42) as well as Bordeaux, Dijon, Lille, Lyon, Marseille, Montpellier, Nantes, Rennes, Rouen, Strasbourg and Toulouse.

## FLUFFY STUFF

## i) PHONES

**Mobiles:** If you have an unblocked mobile phone, it is worth buying a French SIM card as UK prices are extortionate. All French networks are the same price for the SIM at 30euros but vary in how much credit you'll have already on this card. They also vary slightly on top up prices. When buying your SIM you'll need your passport. Make sure when you buy your SIM card that you keep the paper work in case it gets randomly blocked. You can buy 'recharge' for all networks in Tabacs, La Poste or sometimes using ATMs and your Carte Bleu if you've given your mobile no. to your bank.

**Cabines:** The phone system has rapidly moved from a coin-box system to a phone card system. In France it is much more difficult to find coin boxes in towns than it is in Britain, although many bars and cafés still have coin operated machines which is good to know in case of an emergency. The télécarte can be obtained at post-offices and tobacconists.

Call boxes can be used for local long distance and international calls. The international dialling codes will be marked in each telephone box. If you have neither a phone card nor the right change to make a call, you can always use your Carte Bleu to make a call. Obviously it is more expensive than any other payment but it is worth knowing about in case you are faced with an emergency. You call from a card phone box and when you place your card in the slot, you are asked for your PIN number. The amount is then debited directly from your bank account. Phoning from a *France Télécom* line the times for reduced call charges (both nationally and abroad) are 19 h – 8 h, Monday to Friday and from 19 h on Friday through to 8 h Monday. For International calls abroad you need to dial 00 and then after the ringing tone the code number of the country you want, the regional code, and lastly the number.

Service de renseignements is something equivalent to our operator service; to get a service, dial 12 and ask for telephone information. For international information, you should dial 00 33 12 + the code for the country (Britain being 44). For the operator dial 10, international operator dial 00 331. Unfortunately the Service de Renseignements is only free during the day and is available at a low cost after 20.00.

### Emergency Services Telephone Numbers:

Fire (Pompiers): 18  
 Police (Police secours): 17  
 Ambulance (SAMU): 15

Most emergency numbers are regional, so it would be wise to get hold of a copy of *Les Pages Jaunes* in which all such information is listed.

**To install a telephone:** If you are in rented accommodation you may wish to install a telephone. To do this you must check with your landlord/lady to see if there is already a telephone point in the apartment. If there is not then it will take a little longer to have your phone installed and you will have to pay for installation. If there is an existing phone point, ask your landlord/lady if they know the previous number as this will speed the process up. If the place has been empty for no longer than about two months, you ought to get a reduction in the reconnection fee.

To have your phone connected or installed you must go to your local France-Télécom office. Tell them your address and the old number if you know it. You must also show your passport proof of your address and bank account details. You will have to say there and then whether you wish to rent a telephone, whether you wish to have your bill itemised and whether you wish to be listed in the phone book or the Minitel Directory (no cost). All these charges will appear on your monthly bill as well as the charge for connecting the line.

Telephones can be bought for as little as 15€ from any large hypermarket and are often a reasonable alternative to renting a phone. You will have to wait a few days until you receive a letter from France-Télécom, which you must present at the office where you will be given your telephone. Within three days your phone should be working. Contracts with France Télécom are usually for a year.

**Minitel:** This is a widely used computer service. It can be very efficient for information about almost anything but is not that essential. Minitel is available for public use in most post offices (although many sub-post offices have abandoned it) and is free for directory enquiries (the number being 11). Costs vary depending on the service. SNCF information and reservations, concert tickets, holidays, employment and competitions are just a few examples of what the service offers.

## ii) SHOPPING & EATING

**Bars:** British, Australian and Irish bars are the same the world over and are always quite a safe bet if you are feeling nostalgic for a bit of home drinking culture. People in France usually start their nights later than in England and carry on till the first metro home at 5 in the morning. As in most large cities if people are going to spend the night out drinking, it is more likely that they will be found in the more student type bars. Saying that the 'chic' drinking culture seems to be on the increase in France, with more and more new 'trendy' bars to be found. The only familiar faces you will probably see in the typical French bars however, are those of the regular alcoholics who have been propping up the bar since ten o'clock that morning and have the distinctive smell of pastis on their breath.

If you live in the Cité U, look out for various nights put on by different residences they are often a good, fun cheap night. Maison Henrich Heine in the Paris Cité have a weekly Wednesday night bar.

**Restaurants:** In general, restaurants are much cheaper in France than in Britain. If you enjoy eating out, there are always some very reasonable places to go to. Bars often have their own restaurant where the quality of the food can vary from inedible to delicious. If you find a homely place with traditional cuisine, then you may find

some good, honest food. You can eat out in restaurants from about 10 or 20€ a meal. Many restaurants do excellent 3 course meal specials for around 15€, but it all depends on the kind of place you go to. Tipping is really an optional extra. Service is usually included in the bill, so if you have enough money and are satisfied with the service, then it is regarded as a pleasant gesture. You usually tip about 10-15% of the bill; it can be more if you were very satisfied.

Vegetarian restaurants are a rarity in France and 'Vege' options may be limited on the menu, but it is improving slowly! Check travel guides for recommended options.

**Shopping:** In towns of any reasonable size there are usually two ways of doing your shopping; in the town centre where things are usually quite expensive or in what are known as *zones artisanales* or ZAC (zone d'activités commerciales). These are sites found on the outskirts of the town and consist of warehouse after warehouse of different hypermarkets, each one catering for a different commercial 'need'. They are usually called *grandes surfaces*. This is also where the largest supermarkets of the town can be found. In France, the larger the supermarket, the cheaper it is to shop there. *Casino*, *Carrefour*, *Leclerc*, *Continent* and *Super U* are a few examples. The cheapest smaller supermarket is Franchprix, look out for the 'Leader Prix' sticker for an equivalent of Tesco Value in these stores!

France is cheaper than the UK in terms of transport, cigarettes and wine, but you may find clubs and drinking out to be slightly more expensive. Galleries, theatres etc usually have a special cheap day and Parisian museums are free on the first Sunday of every month but expect queues on these days.

Cinemas usually cost around 6€ (student ticket) and have cheap showings in the mornings and UGC and Gaumont cinemas have a card valid for a year, which offers you unlimited access after purchase of the card (which is about 18€ a month, worth it if you enjoy going to the cinema 3 or more times per month). Refreshments are expensive. There are also some specialist cinemas showing old classics or last years films for around 4€.

Some nightclubs have free entry for women and are usually cheaper to get in before 11pm. And, as a student you can have very cheap subscriptions to almost any newspaper or magazine, watch out for flyers when you arrive at your university.

Some useful websites:

[www.cityvox.com](http://www.cityvox.com) sign up for an e-mail newsletter specific to your city/region  
[www.pariscope.fr](http://www.pariscope.fr) general info on going out in Paris etc.

**Opening Hours:** These depend on the size of the town. Most of the large hypermarkets are open from about 9am throughout the lunch hour, until at least 7pm. In large towns they stay open until about 9pm or 10pm. However, the French have not adopted the Sunday trading laws and shops are not open on Sundays. The ONLY places that may be open are boulangeries and maybe a corner shop or two. Other shops tend to stick to the traditional opening hours in France. These are normally 09.00-12.00 and 14.00-19.00/19.30.

**SAFETY AND WELFARE**

Follow the same precautions as you would at home. Hold on tightly to your bags, especially in a crowd, and keep your wallet close to your body so that it cannot be taken without you noticing. Pick-pockets are common, especially around groups of foreigners. If you lose any personal belongings or documents go directly to the police and report it.

Your behaviour will also play a part in your personal safety. The English drinking culture is not quite to the same level in France so just be wary of getting too drunk. If one of your group is the worse for wear, do make sure that you accompany him/her home. Look to your peer group for guidelines on not causing offence to locals and avoid making yourself unnecessarily vulnerable.

In the event of **loss of documents**, the police will write out a temporary form, which will cover you whilst you are in the process of obtaining new papers, which you should do via the nearest British Consulate. If you find yourself without any access to cash, without your passport, or in any other serious kind of trouble, the Consulate will try to help. In the unlikely event of you being **arrested** for a serious offence, insist on the Consulate being informed: you will be contacted as soon as possible by a consular officer who can advise on local procedures, etc.

**i) AVOIDING THEFT**

The only way to avoid theft is to be constantly on your guard; never take out large sums of money unless absolutely necessary and if possible keep your documents and money in a wallet, which you can keep on your person, rather than in a bag which can be easily snatched. If you are robbed, you should report it to the police immediately. If you lose your credit cards or bank cards then get in touch with your bank as soon as you can to have them stopped; banks at home and abroad provide emergency numbers for use in the event of loss or theft, so be sure to make a note of the numbers and keep it separate from the cards themselves. If you lose your French cheque book report the theft immediately because no identification is required when writing a cheque in France!

**Contrôle d'Identité**

Under French Law, all citizens and tourists must carry identification (ID card, driving license or passport) in case they are stopped and questioned by the police for any reason.

**Emergency Services (International Emergency number: 112)**

- Police (secours): tel. 17
- Firemen (pompiers): tel. 18
- Ambulance (SAMU): tel. 15

**ii) HELP ORGANISATIONS**

**AIDS:** Aid Hotline Paris Tel 05.36.66.36

**Amnesty International:** section Française, 18 rue Theodore-Duck, Paris. Tel: 45.57.65.65

**Armée du Salut** (Salvation Army): emergency accommodation, Admin.: 76, rue de Rome, 75008 Paris, Tel 43.87.41.19.

Women: 7 Ave. de la Pte de la Villette, 75019 Paris, Tel: 42.39.50.55.

Men: 8 Ave. de la Pte de la Villette, Paris, Tel: 40.36.33.31

**FACCTS** for English speaking assistance for HIV positive, Paris Tel: 01.45.50.26.49 (Thurs. afternoon only)

**Le centre gay et lesbien:** 3, rue Keller, 75011 Paris. Tel: 01.43.57.21.47.

**Hôpital International de l'Université de Paris: emergency service** Tel: 45.89.47.89 or 40.78.21.21.

**Rape Crisis information:** Viol Femme Information (Paris) Tel: 01.05.05.95.95.

**SOS Drogue International:** 27 rue Plante, Paris Tel: 01.45.39.78.88.

**SOS Friendship:** English speaking help for the lonely and depressed. Tel: 01.47 23 80 80

**SOS Help:** this is an English language help line for women who have been attacked/abused: Paris Tel: 01.47.23.80.80.

**SOS Médecins:** Paris Tel: 01.47.07.77.77 or 01.43.37.77.77.

**SOS Racisme:** 19, rue Martel 75010 Paris. Tel: 01.42.46.53.52 or 01.42.46.57.56.

**SOS Viol:** this rape helpline can be called free from anywhere in France  
Tel: 01.05 05 95 95

For students going to Paris/France from countries other than the UK check out the *Mairie* for a publication called *Vivre à Paris* with lots of useful information. This includes a section called *Vos racines à Paris* (your roots in Paris), with addresses of all kinds of organisations from your country of origin (embassies, churches, schools, cultural institutions, etc).

### iii) BRITISH CONSULATE ADDRESSES

There are British Consulates in most major French cities. A Consulate can provide the following services:

- Issue emergency passports;
- Contact relatives and friends and ask them to help you with money or tickets;
- Advise you how to transfer funds;
- Advance against a sterling cheque for £50 supported by a banker's card;
- Provide a list of local lawyers and doctors;
- Give some guidance on organisations experienced in tracing missing persons;
- If you are arrested on a serious offence, insist on the British Consulate being informed. You will be contacted as soon as possible by a consular officer who can advise on local procedures, etc.
- If you lose your money, passport or anything else abroad, report it first to the local police and obtain a statement about the loss. Then contact the Consulate if you still need help.

If you need access to reading material in English it is often worth enquiring whether they offer a lending library facility - or perhaps they may know of one.

iv) CROUS OFFICES AND YOUTH HOSTELS

<b>Aix-Marseille</b>	Cité Abram, Av Benjamin-Abram, 13261 Aix-en-Provence Tel: 04.42 16 13 13
YHA	3, Av Marcel Pagnol, Aix-en-Provence Tel: 04.42 20 15 99 Allée des Primevères, Marseille Tel: 04.91 49 06 18
<b>Amiens</b>	25, rue Saint-Leu, 80038 Amiens Tel: 03.2271 24 00
<b>Besançon</b>	38, Av de l' Observatoire, 25001, Besançon Tel: 03.81 48 46 46
<b>Bordeaux</b>	18, rue du Hamel, 33033 Bordeaux. Tel: 05.56 33 92 00
<b>Caen</b>	23, Av de Bruxelles, 14070 Caen Cedex Tel: 02.31.56.63.00
YHA	68, Rue Eustache Restout. Tel: 02.31 52 19 96
<b>Dijon</b>	3, rue du Docteur-Maret, 21012 Dijon Tel: 03.80 40 40 40
YHA	1, Bld Champollion. Tel: 03.80 72 95 20
<b>Grenoble</b>	5, rue d'Arsonval, 38019 Grenoble Tel: 04.76 57 44 00
YHA	18, Av du Grésivaudan, 38130 Echirolles Tel: 04.76 09 33 52
<b>Lille</b>	74, rue de Cambrai, 59043 Lille Tel: 03.20 88 66 00
YHA	1, Av Julien Detrée. Tel: 03.20 52 76 02
<b>Lyon</b>	59, rue de la Madeleine, 69365 Lyon Tel: 04.72 80 17 70
YHA	51, rue Roger Salengrol, 69200 Venissieux Tel: 04.78 76 39 23
<b>Montpellier</b>	2, rue Monteil, 34033 Montpellier Tel: 04.67 41 50 00
YHA	2, impasse de la Petite Corraterie Rue des Ecoles Laïques Tel: 04.67 60 32 22
<b>Nantes</b>	2, Bld Guy Mollet, 44072 Nantes Tel: 02.40 37 13 13
YHA	1, Place Sainte Elisabeth

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Tel: 02.40 20 63 79

<b>Nice</b>	18, Av des Fleurs, 06050 Nice Tel: 04.92 15 50 50
<b>YHA</b>	Route Forestière du Mont-Alban Tel: 04.93 89 23 64
<b>Paris</b>	39, Av Georges-Bernanos, 75321 Paris Tel: 01.40 51 36 00
<b>YHA</b>	80, rue Vitruve Tel: 01.40 32 34 55 8, Bld Jules Ferry Tel: 01.43 57 55 60
<b>Reims</b>	34, Bld Henry-Vasnier, 51063 Reims Tel: 03.26 50 59 00
<b>Réunion</b>	Rue Hippolyte-Foucque, 97490 Sainte-Clotilde, La Réunion Tel: 00.262.48 32 32
<b>Rouen</b>	3 rue d'Herbouville, 76042 Rouen Tel: 02.32 08 50 00
<b>Strasbourg</b>	1, quai du Maire-Dietrich, 67084 Strasbourg Tel: 03.88 21 28 00
<b>YHA</b>	9, Rue de l'Auberge de Jeunesse. Tel: 03.88 30 26 46
<b>Toulouse</b>	58, rue du Taur, 31070 Toulouse Tel: 05.61
<b>Versailles</b>	145bis, Bld de la Reine, 78005 Versailles Tel: 01.39 24 52 00

v) UBU

Don't forget that even though you're abroad, you are still a student at Bristol, and hence entitled to help from people back here. The Students' Union offers help and advice on anything ranging from accommodation to homesickness to finances and the Student Advisor ([advice-ubu@bris.ac.uk](mailto:advice-ubu@bris.ac.uk)) and the Vice President (Welfare) ([vicepresident-ubu@bris.ac.uk](mailto:vicepresident-ubu@bris.ac.uk)) are always happy to answer any queries!