



Boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.

BACKGROUND

Land and Climate

Slightly smaller than Texas, France covers 212,935 square miles (551,500 square kilometers). As the country is hexagonal in shape, it is sometimes referred to as *Hexagone*. The terrain is varied, from plains to mountains and forests to farmland. Mountains stretch along the borders with Spain, Italy, and Switzerland. France boasts one of Europe's highest peaks, Mont Blanc, at 15,771 feet (4,807 meters). The Rhine (Rhin) River forms part of the border with Germany. A flat plain with rolling hills dominates the northern area.

The southern climate is Mediterranean, with cool, moist winters and hot, dry summers. The north is temperate and rainy. The west is also rainy and influenced by the Atlantic, which moderates winter temperatures. The central, east, and upland areas have a continental climate, with fluctuating temperatures; in the mountains, thunderstorms are prevalent in summer. French sovereignty extends to the island of Corsica (Corse) as well as 10 overseas territories and *départements* (overseas divisions of France that have representatives in the French government as well as some local autonomy).

History

By 51 BC, the Romans had conquered the area's Celtic inhabitants, the Gauls, who then adopted the Romans' customs, language, and laws. Clovis I, king of the Franks, defeated the last Roman governor in AD 486. The French consider his conversion to Catholicism in 496 the founding

act of the nation; the move won him the support of the Catholic Church and Gallo-Roman people, who helped him defeat surrounding Arian kingdoms. In the late eighth century, France was part of Charlemagne's vast empire. After the empire's disintegration, France emerged as one of the successor kingdoms in 987. The following centuries brought intermittent conflict, particularly with the English, including the Hundred Years' War, from 1337 to 1453. In 1429, after 80 years of war, Joan of Arc led the French in victory over the English. Later burned to death by the English (1431), she remains a French heroine.

By the late 1600s, France dominated Europe. Under Louis XIV (the Sun King), the movement toward centralized government reached its peak. His palace at Versailles was the envy of the continent. But by 1789, royal extravagance and defeats in foreign wars resulted in the French Revolution. Louis XVI's monarchy was toppled, and the country entered the Reign of Terror. Despite the brutality of the uprising, the French Revolution marks a milestone in world history because it started a movement toward democratic government. After a decade of instability, Napoleon Bonaparte took power, declaring himself emperor in 1804. Napoleon conquered most of Europe before embarking on a disastrous campaign in Russia in 1812. In 1814, Austrian and Prussian forces seized Paris, and Napoleon was exiled. His 1815 return to power, called his "Hundred Days," ended in defeat by the English at Waterloo.

The monarchy was restored but was followed by the Second Republic (1848–52) and then the Second Empire (1852–70), under Napoleon III. Defeat by Germany led to the Third Republic in 1871. France was a battleground during

both world wars. It was occupied by Germany between 1940 and 1944 and was the site of the D-Day invasion that turned the tide of World War II in favor of the Allies. The Fourth Republic was declared in 1946; it was followed by the Fifth Republic in 1958, with Charles de Gaulle as president. France was a founding member of the European Community and is a central force in today's European Union (EU).

In 1968, students and workers protested over a rigid educational system and poor working conditions; their protests resulted in lasting social change. The 1968 events were still fresh in the public's mind when students in the early 1990s took to the streets, protesting conditions in public schools and proposed changes in wage laws. The social unrest and economic problems led three successive prime ministers to resign. Internal politics were more stable until massive rioting broke out among suburban youth in 2005.

Among the first wave of EU countries to adopt the euro, France voted against the EU constitution in 2005 but ratified a modified version, the Lisbon Treaty, three years later. In the wake of a global recession in 2008, the government injected over 40 billion euros into the French economy, followed in 2010 by a cut in national spending of 45 billion euros.

THE PEOPLE

Population

France's population of roughly 64.8 million is growing annually at 0.53 percent. More than three-fourths of the population lives in urban areas. Greater Paris claims nearly 12 million inhabitants and Marseille well over 1 million. Ethnically, the French have a Celtic heritage that has mixed with various other European groups (Latin, Nordic, Teutonic, Slavic, and others) over the centuries. Primary immigrant groups include Portuguese, Italians, Spaniards, Poles, and those from former French colonies in North Africa, West Africa, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia. Although they have integrated into French society, the various ethnic groups do not always mix with one another. North Africans tend to remain the most separate because of their religion, Islam.

Language

French is an important international language. It is an official language of the United Nations and is second only to English in use between nations for communication, business, and diplomacy. The French government has stressed the language so much that almost everyone in France speaks French, despite the different nationalities represented. Regional dialects were in danger of disappearing, but the French government has recently made an effort to preserve them. It is possible to study regional dialects at school, just as if they were foreign languages.

French students begin learning their first foreign language at age nine. Instruction in a second foreign language begins at 13. Communication skills are emphasized over grammar and theory. English is the most common first foreign language. Spanish and German are common second foreign languages. Despite its emphasis on foreign-language instruction, the French government resists the inclusion of foreign words in

the French language. The *Académie française* is the government body that tries to keep French pure.

Religion

Although about 85 percent of the French population is Roman Catholic, only about 8 percent actively practices the religion. Most French Catholics celebrate the various religious holidays and attend Mass once or twice a year. Half have a religious wedding, and about half baptize their children. These religious ceremonies have become mostly social rites for most French, who do not have strong religious beliefs. While active worship is increasingly rare, many people still visit shrines and other places of devotion. Approximately 10 percent of the population practices Islam, making it the second largest religion in France. A small number of the people are Protestants (2 percent), Jewish (1 percent), or Buddhist (1 percent). About 4 percent of the population claims no religious affiliation. There is a strict separation between church and state in France. Wearing religious symbols is prohibited in schools and public places.

General Attitudes

The French measure success by educational level, family reputation, and financial status. Among the most patriotic people in the world, they are extremely proud of their culture, heritage, and way of life. This patriotism fosters a general expectation that visitors have some knowledge of French and show appreciation for French culture. Although the country is very multicultural, it seeks to maintain its identity by resisting the growing popularity (especially among young people) of cheap fast food, foreign sitcoms, and American music. The government restricts the percentage of non-French entertainment on national radio and television channels. The French are reserved and private but tend to be more hospitable outside Paris. Politeness is valued, and *S'il vous plaît* (Please) is a common phrase.

While the culture of Paris has traditionally directed French attitudes, political and social trends have caused the French to reexamine their national identity. This introspection has led some to predict that French society will experience fundamental change during the next generation. Areas of change may include education, immigration, economics, the central government's structure, or even language.

Personal Appearance

In general, the French take great care to dress well, whether they are wearing formal or casual attire, and they feel more at ease with visitors who show the same degree of attention to appearance. Paris is home to many of the world's leading fashion designers. Professional attire, depending on the business and location, tends to be formal. Parisians dress more formally than people in other cities. In the southern sunbelt, dress is more casual but not less stylish. Most French women value a natural look and wear very little makeup.

French students are not required to wear a uniform to go to school; they do have to follow a dress code. Students wear sports clothes during P.E. Young people wear more casual clothes on weekends or when at home and more stylish clothes when they go out with friends or family. They also

like to try out different clothing and hairstyles until they find their own style.

French people generally believe religious dress is contrary to the principles of France's secular society, and some Muslim women in France face controversy over the way they dress. In 2004, France banned the wearing of head scarves in schools and other public buildings.

CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

Greetings

When greeting someone other than a friend, a handshake is customary. The French handshake is a light grip and a single, quick shake. Women customarily are kissed on both cheeks by male and female friends. Men only kiss the cheeks of males who are relatives or close friends. When people give kisses, they generally just touch cheeks and “kiss the air.” The number of kisses given varies by region and ranges from two to four. Standard phrases for greeting include *Bonjour* (Good day) and *Comment allez-vous?* or the more informal *Ça va?* (both meaning “How are you?”). Greetings are usually combined with the person's name or a title and always precede any conversation or request. Good-bye is *Au revoir* (Until we meet again) or the less formal *A bientôt* (See you soon). A favorite among young people is *Salut* for both greeting and parting. Friends and close colleagues use first names; otherwise, professional titles and titles such as *Monsieur* (Mr.), *Madame* (Mrs.), and *Mademoiselle* (Miss) are common.

Gestures

The French are careful about their personal habits, being discreet when sneezing, blowing the nose, etc. They do not use personal items, such as combs and toothpicks, in public. It is improper to speak with one's hands in one's pockets or to chew gum in public. Sitting with legs spread apart is impolite for women; one should sit straight with knees together or with legs crossed at the knee. Feet are not placed on tables or chairs. The “okay” sign used in the United States (a rounded index finger touching the tip of the thumb) means “zero” to the French. The French gesture for “okay” is the “thumbs up” sign. Slapping the open palm over a closed fist is vulgar and should be avoided.

Visiting

The French are formal in their visiting customs, and people do not often visit unannounced. Guests usually arrive on time because punctuality is a sign of courtesy. However, for some social events it is also polite to arrive a few minutes late, allowing the hosts extra time for final preparations. Guests do not enter a home until invited inside. They generally sit where the host directs. It is a polite gesture to bring candy, wine, or flowers to the hostess, except red roses (reserved for romantic love) and chrysanthemums (used in cemeteries). When ending a visit, a guest waits for a polite silence before rising. At the door, small talk, expressions of thanks, and repeated good-byes continue; it is impolite to be in a hurry to leave. At mealtime, eating is never rushed because the conversation is

appreciated as much as the food, though it is best to avoid personal questions and topics such as religion or money. The hosts should be complimented on the meal; good cooking is a matter of pride in French homes.

Eating

Etiquette is important to the French. Both hands remain above the table at all times. A man may rest his wrists, and a woman her forearms, on the table edge. One does not place the elbows on the table. The French eat with the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right. In formal contexts, lettuce is folded into small pieces with the fork but never cut. Fruit is peeled and cut with a knife and eaten with a fork. Bread, eaten with every meal, is broken with the fingers and used to wipe the plate. It can also be used to push food onto the fork; in this case, the bread is held in the left hand and the fork in the right. One places the knife and fork parallel across the plate when finished. Formal lunches and dinners may last more than two hours, with as many as eight to twelve courses.

Social meals begin with an appetizer, followed by *hors d'oeuvres*; a first course of soup or salad; a main course of fish, pasta, or a meat cooked in a crust or sauce; cheese; and then a dessert. Coffee or liquor finish the evening. A typical family meal has two to four courses. Meals with extended family can last up to four hours. When eating out, the person who invites or makes the suggestion usually pays.

Wine is consumed with most meals, except breakfast; numerous varieties are available. Red wine generally accompanies meat and cheese, white wine is drunk with fish, and rose wine is an appetizer. Unless certain of its high quality, foreign guests should not give wine as a gift. In formal meals, champagne is drunk with either the appetizer or the dessert.

LIFESTYLE

Family

Both the nuclear family and the extended family are important in France. Grandparents play an important role in French families; they sometimes care for grandchildren while the parents are working. However, some French people are now moving away from their extended families to work or study. Still, many children remain at home until they finish their education, and families enjoy getting together when possible, often on Sundays. Families usually gather for dinner; cooking together and sharing meals is a bonding experience for many French families.

A French mother is the core of the family unit; she holds the family together. Though more women now work outside of their homes, mothers still find time for their families, especially their children. Women often choose to take care of their education and their career before deciding to have a family of their own. This can be challenging in France, where many women have to work harder than their male colleagues to prove that they are capable. Most French women do not marry and have families until they are in their thirties.

Most families enjoy a comfortable standard of living, although class distinctions are still fairly visible. The average

French family has one or two children. Pets outnumber children in France and receive special attention.

Housing

Most people live in urban areas, with a growing number moving out of city centers into suburbs. After the Second World War, many French were homeless. Beginning in the 1960s, the federal government built cheap buildings containing dozens of apartments for poor families. These low-rent lodgings have grown old and dilapidated. Many are now being torn down to allow for the construction of less generic and more attractive homes. Housing style varies by region, with local mayors occasionally insisting that all houses in their district conform to certain standards. In Alsace, for example, all the houses are painted in bright colors and have outside beams and flower baskets that must be kept in good condition. In the north of France, most houses have grey-slated roofs, while in the south most roofs are made of red tiles. Many people rely on government subsidies to afford expensive housing. Environmentally friendly housing is valued, and the government reinforces this by subsidizing solar panels, wood heating, and other “green” features.

Dating and Marriage

French young people would rather hang out with a group of friends than date. Favorite activities include going to parks, friends' houses, cafés, dances, and movies. Boys and girls spend their time laughing and talking, and hanging out often leads to more serious relationships. Parents are usually supportive of relationships and may even allow a young adult couple to live in their home for a period of time.

Many French people no longer believe that marriage is important; this is partly because of high divorce rates. French *le pacs*, or an agreement that two parties make in front of a legal representative, allows any couple who makes it the same rights that belong to a married couple. *Le pacs* can be ended easily, without a divorce. Couples often commit to this type of arrangement instead of getting engaged; it is a way to see if the relationship will work out before getting married.

Wedding days are very important in France; they require a lot of preparation and money. Traditionally, the wedding is celebrated in the bride's hometown, and the bride wears a white dress. There are two separate ceremonies. The first is at the city hall, where the couple is legally married by the mayor. This is followed by a second, optional religious ceremony at a church. Friends, family, and acquaintances all attend the city hall ceremony and then follow the couple's car to the church. They honk their car horns along the way. After the ceremony, a light meal, *le vin d'honneur*, is served for all the guests. Gifts, usually of money, are given to the couple. At night, friends and family attend the reception, where a big meal—with many courses and a traditional wedding cake—is served and dancing lasts until dawn.

Life Cycle

Pregnancy is usually a happy time of preparation; parents want everything to be perfect for the arrival of their new baby. France's parental policies are very supportive of parents: All women workers have paid maternity leave at

least 6 weeks before and 10 weeks after each child's birth. At the end of this maternity leave, either the mother or father can take job-protected parental leave until the child is three years old. If a parent chooses to leave employment completely, he or she receives a parental leave allowance. Although relatively few French citizens are regular churchgoers, most observe traditional Catholic rituals. A few months to a year after birth, a baby is baptized and given godparents.

At 12 or 13, many children take their First Communion. This is usually a big event, involving a religious ceremony and a large family gathering with plenty of food. Children named after a saint from the Christian calendar often celebrate the day to which that saint is linked. For example, boys named Nicolas may be given small presents on 6 December (St. Nicolas Day).

The biggest transition from childhood to adulthood is high school graduation. Students must take a *bac* (short for *baccalauréat*) exam to qualify for university studies. Graduation is viewed as a transition to independence for the new adults, who are now able to drive, earn their own money, and build their own lives. National military service is no longer compulsory.

When a person dies, a religious ceremony is held at a church to honor him or her, after which friends and family follow the coffin to the cemetery where the person is buried. Cremation, which is less expensive, is becoming more common. A light meal is then given at the family's home, and friends and family share memories of the deceased with each other. Families often bring flowers to the gravesite at every anniversary of the death and on All Saints' Day (1 November).

Diet

The French consider cooking an art, and French cuisine is famous worldwide. The first French cookbooks date back to the Middle Ages, and French standards were the early gauge of fine cooking. Regional traditions are strong. There are several types of cooking, ranging from hearty, inexpensive fare to sophisticated dishes with costly ingredients. *Nouvelle cuisine*, created in the 1960s, was a reaction to heavy cooking. While still made of expensive ingredients, it is much lighter, portions are smaller, and the presentation is more artistic.

Most people eat a light breakfast of coffee and bread or croissants. Lunch was once the main meal of the day, but urban society has changed, and many people now have a light lunch, not eating their main meal until the evening. In Paris, lunch (*déjeuner*) is usually eaten around noon or 1 p.m. and dinner often is not before 8 p.m. In other parts of the country, particularly rural areas, people eat earlier.

Filled croissants and sandwiches can be bought in shops and cafés. Cafés also offer toasted ham-and-cheese sandwiches (*croque-monsieurs*) and salad-type vegetables for a light meal. *Pâtisseries* (pastry shops) sell cakes, and some restaurants sell crêpes. The French population tends to resist foreign fast food because of health concerns about genetically modified foods and worries about globalization, which is seen as a threat to France's small farmers. Even so, many hamburger restaurants operate across the country.

Recreation

The French are enthusiastic spectators, but fewer participate in team sports than might be expected. Soccer and rugby are popular spectator sports; France hosted and won the 1998 World Cup soccer competition. Participation is highest in individual sports: cycling, fishing, tennis, hiking, skiing, and sailing. Others enjoy hunting, riding horses, and golfing. People of all ages enjoy *pétanque*, a form of bowling that originated in southern France.

Young boys play soccer or rugby in clubs. Swimming is also popular among boys, but more popular among young girls, who usually go to dance and gymnastic classes. Teenage girls usually switch to different sports, while teenage boys keep playing soccer. It is becoming more common for adults to jog, walk, or ride bicycles.

The French enjoy spending leisure time with their friends or family. They love to cook and eat together. On the weekends, many people also like to go to the movies, hike, camp, or picnic with friends. French women also love to shop. The annual Tour de France cycling race and the French Open tennis tournament are popular national events.

Most people take five weeks of paid vacation each year—four weeks in the summer and one week at Christmas. Summer music festivals occur throughout France. French students enjoy two weeks of vacation after every six weeks of school, which enables them to visit their extended families. If they can't spend time with their families, students often attend daytime outdoor activity centers or holiday camps. Camp activities vary according to the season and may include skiing, horseback riding, hiking, or swimming. Students also have about three months of summer vacation. During the summertime, the whole family is able to go on vacation together, usually to the beach or to the mountains. Camping is a popular activity in the summer. During August, when many people travel, some shops and factories close.

The Arts

French literature, art, and architecture have greatly influenced the modern world. Modern French writers helped introduce movements such as surrealism, existentialism, and postmodernism. The impressionist movement in art, which emphasized subjective representation and the reflection of light, began in France at the end of the 1800s. Famous examples of French architecture include the Eiffel Tower and Gothic cathedrals. The first photograph was taken in France in 1827, and Jacques Daguerre and other French artists soon helped make photography into a respected art form. The first motion picture was shown in 1895 in France, and later French contributions included the film projector and trick photography. France is also known for its cuisine, philosophy, ballet, ceramics, and fashion. French designers such as Christian Dior, Coco Chanel, Cartier, and Louis Vuitton retain a prominent place in the world of international high fashion.

Holidays

The French celebrate several holidays each year. For New

Year's (*Jour de l'an*), they often present flowers to older family members, and some exchange gifts. People celebrate New Year's Eve with parties and fireworks. In February, *Mardi Gras* (Shrove Tuesday) is celebrated with parades, costumes, and parties. Easter Sunday and Monday are legal holidays. Labor Day (1 May) is marked by parades and celebrates the coming of spring. Other holidays include French Armistice Day (*Le Huit Mai*, 8 May), World War I Armistice Day (11 Nov.), and Catholic holidays like Ascension, Pentecost, Assumption (15 Aug.), and All Saints' Day (1 Nov.).

Bastille Day (*La Fête Nationale*) is 14 July. Bastille Day commemorates the storming of the Bastille prison in Paris during the French Revolution. It is celebrated with a huge military parade in Paris; thousands gather on les Champs-Élysées, and thousands watch it on television. The parade ends in front of the president and his guests. Smaller parades are held in every French city. Friends and families get together to play games and have picnics. Fireworks shows are held in every city.

On 21 June, the French celebrate *la Fête de la Musique* (the Music Party), a night celebration commemorating summer's beginning and the longest day of the year. People gather in cities and villages to listen to music groups who sing and play music at free concerts.

World War I Armistice Day, 11 November, is a national holiday and a time of contemplation. Some cities host parades and political figures giving speeches about World War I. Military cemeteries commemorate this day with ceremonies where stories are told and pictures of veterans are displayed. Television stations show documentaries about the war.

At Christmas (*Noël*), the tree is decorated before or on Christmas Eve. The Christmas season is important in France. People prepare for Christmas by decorating, putting up lights, and shopping for gifts. Christmas is a magical time for French children, who leave their shoes by the fireplace for *Père Noël* (Santa Claus) to fill. On Christmas Eve, families gather and share specialties like escargots, *foie gras*, oysters, smoked salmon, turkey, cheese, and baguettes. For dessert, they serve the *bûche de Noël*, a cake with vanilla or chocolate frosting and flavored filling. Families also often go to midnight mass on Christmas Eve at the nearest church, where they listen to the choir sing and hear the Christmas story. Families then return home and open the presents *Père Noël* has left for everyone. Holiday festivities last through New Year's. On 6 January, the Epiphany (which celebrates the Magi's visit to the baby Jesus) is celebrated by sharing a *gâteau des rois* (king cake), a round, flat cake with a lucky charm hidden inside.

SOCIETY

Government

The French Republic has 22 regions subdivided into 96 departments, not including overseas possessions. France's president is directly elected, serving as head of state and executive head of government for a five-year term. The president (currently Nicolas Sarkozy) appoints a prime

minister from the majority party in the National Assembly and has the right to dissolve the Assembly to call for new elections. The president has no veto power but can rule by emergency decree in a crisis. The National Assembly's 577 members are elected for five-year terms. The Senate's 331 members serve six-year terms. One-third of its members are indirectly elected every three years. The voting age is 18.

Economy

France's large industrial economy and welfare-style government allow its people to enjoy the benefits of economic prosperity. Inflation is low, but high unemployment and budget deficits are ongoing challenges. The global financial crisis of 2008 prompted France to develop a US\$33 billion economic stimulus package. In 2002, the euro officially replaced France's former currency, the *franc*. As one of Europe's leading agricultural producers, France is self-sufficient in most foods. The agricultural sector employs about 4 percent of the workforce and is a world leader in the production of wine, milk, butter, cheese, barley, and wheat. One-third of the land is arable. Major industries include steel, motor vehicles, aircraft, textiles, chemicals, and food processing. Exports include machinery and transport equipment, steel products, and agricultural goods. Around 80 percent of France's energy is generated by nuclear power plants. The service sector employs roughly 70 percent of the labor force. France attracts more tourists than any other country in the world.

Transportation and Communications

France's public transportation system is well developed. Buses serve most cities, and train service extends to even the smallest towns. Trains are best for long-distance travel. The TGV (*train à grande vitesse*) is a high-speed passenger train, reaching 186 mph (300 km/h). Most people own private cars, which are generally French brands, such as Renault or Peugeot. Subways are known as the *métro*. The French domestic air system is efficient, and car ferries link France with Corsica (Corse) and Great Britain. A trip from Paris to London by train crosses under the English Channel and takes three hours; tunnel time is 35 minutes.

The communications system is modern. Pay phones generally use credit cards or phone cards (*telécarte*) purchased at a post office. The post office is the center for various forms of communication and transactions. Most French people have mobile phones. Internet is widely used in French offices and households.

Education

Schooling is free and compulsory from age 6 to 16. Preschool is also free, but not compulsory, from age 2 to 6. However, nearly all children enroll because the French believe that preschools are important for developing the communication skills of young children. The public primary school day starts at 8:30 or 9 a.m., has a two-hour lunch break around noon, and then lasts until 4:30 or 5 p.m. Children go to school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, and have Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday off. Parents who work bring their children to school before it starts, and the children

are taken care of by the school staff during the lunch break. Nearly 20 percent of all children attend Catholic schools, which are partly subsidized by the state.

Secondary education, lasting seven years, is offered by *collèges* and *lycées*. *Collège*, similar to junior high school, lasts for four years. School goes from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Monday to Friday, with a half day on Wednesday. After *collège*, students take an exam called the *brevet*. Students then have more than one option they can follow: continue on to high school (known as *lycée*) or go to a trade school to gain experience in a specific trade. French *lycées* involve a full week of classes and a large amount of homework. The French education system values individual work, as well as testing, to judge the knowledge of individual students. All French students are required to study English.

After secondary education, students take an exam to determine whether they may go on to higher education. Students can either go to traditional universities or to professional schools that offer school classes combined with work experience. Businesses tend to look favorably on students who go to professional schools because of the experience they gain in their chosen field. Some students attend a university because they do not yet feel ready to enter the job market. Education is relatively inexpensive at France's 60 universities, including the Sorbonne in Paris. However, the best students take further preparatory classes in order to attend the *grandes écoles*, where they study for careers in government, the military, education, and industry (engineering, marketing, and management).

Health

The French enjoy good health and have a high life expectancy. Medical care is generally good and is available to all citizens through a socialized system. Prices and fees are fixed by the government. Many French people also carry private insurance to pay fees not covered by the government. In addition to public hospitals, private clinics are available. The government has recently raised taxes on cigarettes in an effort to curb the number of smokers in the country.

AT A GLANCE

Contact Information

Embassy of France, 4101 Reservoir Road NW, Washington, DC 20007; phone (202) 944-6000; web site www.info-france-usa.org. French Government Tourist Office, 825 Third Avenue, 29th Floor, New York, NY 10022; phone (514) 288-1904; web site us.franceguide.com.

POPULATION & AREA

Population _____ 64,768,389 (rank=21)
Area, sq. mi. _____ 212,935 (rank=49)
Area, sq. km. _____ 551,500

DEVELOPMENT DATA

Human Dev. Index* rank _____ 14 of 182 countries
Gender inequality rank _____ 11 of 155 countries
Real GDP per capita _____ \$32,500
Adult literacy rate _____ 99% (male); 99% (female)
Infant mortality rate _____ 3 per 1,000 births
Life expectancy _____ 78 (male); 84 (female)

*UN Development Programme, Human Development Report 2010 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).