

PRATICAL INFORMATION FOR YOUR STAY IN FRANCE

1 - Formalities

To prepare for your stay in France, you will need to know the official procedures and regulations that apply to people from your country on educational visits to France.

Some formalities will have to be completed before you leave for France, and others after you arrive.

In any case, applicants to l'Ecole need a passport valid for the duration of the course (**10 months**).

Before coming in France, they need to be informed on visa requirements for travelling in Europe (including Switzerland).

2 - Grants and financial support

We recommend that prospective students apply for fellowships or grants from national, international, industrial, or foundation sources for which they may be eligible.

French government grants are primarily offered under specific cooperation programmes, and only very occasionally in response to individual requests. Please ask for updated information from the French Embassy educational or cultural services in your country.

In all cases, requests for financial support have to be initiated before the course starts and in respect with specified calendars. For instance, for an entry on September, some application file are to be returned before January.

3 - Budget

Foreigners wishing to study in France are required to prove that they have resources above a minimum threshold level recommended by the French Ministry of Welfare (Ministère des Affaires Sociales).

But students should realize that this threshold amount (EUR 5,124 per year) is very unlikely to cover usual living expenses in France.

The list below gives an idea of usual expenses for students on a minimum budget.

Accommodation

A privately rented bedsit can cost from EUR 450 to 650 per month. Accommodation is usually more expensive in Paris than elsewhere.

Campus accommodation costs from EUR 118 to 400 per month, depending on the location and type of flat and is only reserved to students registered at the University.

Local residence tax

A residence tax (taxe d'habitation) is levied once a year by the commune where you live. This tax goes towards financing the upkeep and activities of the commune. It is calculated according to the location, floor area and number of windows of the apartment or house where you live. The calculation also takes into account the number of businesses and industries located in the sector. Residents on low incomes can, in some cases, receive a reduction or an exemption.

The residence tax does not apply to you if you live in a hall of residence or hostel, or if you are staying with a private citizen. It does apply to you if you rent a bedsit (studio), a room with independent access (chambre indépendante) or an apartment.

Food

A minimum monthly food budget will be somewhere between EUR 150 to 250.

Transport

A monthly transport pass in Grenoble will cost approx. 40 Euros.

Health insurance

Coverage under the French national health insurance scheme (sécurité sociale) costs a minimum of EUR 186 per year.

Entertainment

A cinema ticket costs EUR 9 on average (though there is often a student rate at EUR 7), a soft drink in a café costs about EUR 3.50, and a meal in a restaurant costs at least EUR 10 (more often around EUR 14 to 17).

4 - Accommodation

The type of accommodation you choose -flat, hotel, apartment hotel, room in private house, hostel, campus accommodation, hall of residence, etc.- will depend on your status, budget and length of stay.

Many participants will need to make accommodation arrangements well in advance, which is no easy matter for those with no contact in France.

5 - Learning french

The Ministry of Education (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale) recognizes two French language diplomas: the DELF basic diploma (Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française) and the DALF advanced diploma (Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française).

The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs has compiled a catalogue of educational centres offering courses in French as a foreign language in France. This catalogue lists key services, opening dates, courses, examination, addresses, etc. Website: www.diplomatie.gouv.fr

The Alliance Française Web site lists the addresses of all its Alliance Française centres worldwide. (www.alliancefr.org)

6 - Health

To obtain a residence permit (carte de séjour) entitling them to stay in France, all foreigners must be able to prove that they have health insurance (couverture sociale) covering partial or total reimbursement of medical expenses (hospital, doctor, dentist, medicines).

7 - Money

The Euro

On 1 January 1999, the fifteen members of the European Union adopted a single currency, the euro, which becomes (became) sole legal tender for the 304 million inhabitants of the Euro Zone (i.e. all European Union countries except for the UK, Denmark and Sweden) on 1 January 2002. The new single currency makes travel and price comparisons much easier. Coins have one side common to all twelve countries, and one side specific to each issuer country.

Euro banknotes are identical throughout the Euro Zone, and depict architectural styles through seven ages of European history, from ancient on € 5 notes to modern on the € 500 notes.

8 - Banks

Opening a bank account

If you are a foreigner staying in France for more than three months, you are entitled to open a bank account.

If you are staying for less than three months, you may open an account at a savings bank (Caisse d'Épargne) or at the Post Office (La Poste). The savings banks have a large network of branches and there is a post office in most French communes. Savings bank and post office accounts are managed in exactly the same way as accounts at commercial banks.

If you will be in France for less than three months and your stay is being organized by Égide, you can also opt to receive money by cashier's cheque with La Poste (French Post Office). Your allowance is sent to La Poste in the town where you are staying and you can collect it by showing the cashier's cheque plus your passport.

To open a bank account, you will need to show the three following documents:

* valid passport

* carte de séjour

* proof of address: telephone or electricity bill, rent receipt, certificat d'hébergement (official document stating that you are staying with a private resident, obtained by your French host from the local mairie), etc.

Approximately 10 days after opening the account, you will receive a chequebook and/or a credit card.

Chequebooks are usually free of charge. Credit cards, which are valid for two years, cost between EUR 15 and EUR 30 per year, depending on the bank and the type of card.

When you open an account, you may be offered an overdraft facility. Overdrafts can be expensive: when your account balance is negative, the bank charges you interest (agios). If you exceed your authorized overdraft limit, you risk withdrawal of cheque and credit card facilities (interdiction bancaire). This means you will have to pay for everything in cash, including bills, rent and all purchases.

If your chequebook is lost or stolen, contact your bank branch during working hours to make a stop-payment order (opposition). Outside working hours, you will need to call the lost and stolen cheque service at the Banque de France (08 36 68 32 08) and give them your bank account number to register a stop-payment order.

Opening a bank account is generally free of charge, though some services (like a stop-payment order if your chequebook or credit card is lost or stolen) carry fees. Some banks also charge for closing an account.

9 - Credit cards

With any valid credit card, you can withdraw cash from any automated teller machine (ATM) at any bank, savings bank or post office (not necessarily the bank where you have your account). ATMs are open 24 hours a day and take several types of credit card (Visa, Eurocard, etc.).

Most shops accept payment by credit card for purchases above a minimum amount (usually EUR 15.24). There is usually a minimum purchase amount for cheques, too, but this may be lower, at EUR 7.62. Each shop has its own policy on this; there are no fixed rules.

If you have an international credit card, you can use it in most countries, including France.

You can also use your credit card to make phone calls from public telephone booths: the cost of the call is debited automatically from your bank account.

If your credit card is lost or stolen, call the 24-hour telephone number (given to you when you receive your card and indicated on all ATMs) to make a stop-payment order. This will normally prevent anyone from using your card. However, you should confirm the stop payment order in writing at your bank.