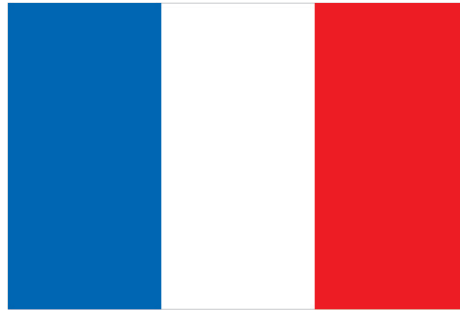


IDENTITIES ABROAD: FRANCE*



IDENTITIES ABROAD

As you prepare for your education abroad program, you may be considering how your own identities may or may not interact with the host culture in similar or different ways than they do at home. Below you will find country-specific information on potential challenges for students who are from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in education abroad programs. This information, adapted from the Diversity Network's Country Diversity Notes (via [Diversity Abroad](#)), is intended to assist you in exploring how you might be received abroad based on your race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, or ability.

The information below features a country overview for France as well as information pertinent to the socio-cultural climate that U.S. students of diverse backgrounds can reasonably expect while living in the country. It also offers bulleted information noting facts that may directly relate to student experiences in the country. Links with additional information resources on the various topics are also offered.

The below information provides a bird's-eye view of diversity matters in the country as they pertain to U.S. students. IEGI understands the below information is not exhaustive or inclusive of all possible student identities and experiences. We encourage you to conduct further research and chat with relevant points of contact including your program advisor, faculty leader, or peers who have traveled to France, to gain a greater understanding of your host country and/or city.

If you would like to speak with us about any questions pertaining to diversity and inclusivity abroad, please contact us at study.abroad@purchase.edu and we will answer your inquiry to the best of our ability and/or refer you to others with the expertise that you need. Additionally, if you are interested in discussing other geographical locations, please don't hesitate to contact us.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

FAST FACTS:

Capital: Paris

Population: 67,848,156 (July 2020 est. – including overseas territories)

Language(s): French (official) 100%, declining regional dialects and languages (Provençal, Breton, Alsatian, Corsican, Catalan, Basque, Flemish, Occitan, Picard)

Religions: Roman Catholic 27.7%, Protestant 25.5%, Muslim 5.1%, Orthodox 1.9%, other Christian 1.1%, other .9%, none 37.8% (2018 est.)

Ethnic groups: Celtic and Latin with Teutonic, Slavic, North African, Indochinese, Basque minorities



**Special thanks to the SUNY Binghamton International Education and Global Initiatives Office (IEGI) for adapting this document and for sharing it with the Purchase Office for Global Education (OGE).*

With a Renowned for its history, culture, art, architecture – and, of course, cuisine – France is a popular international tourist destination. With a wide range of education abroad options and easy travel to all of Western Europe, it is little surprise that France is the 4th ranked destination for U.S. study abroad students. More U.S. students study in Paris than in any other place in the country.

For the most part, France is a liberal country with robust laws to protect ethnic and religious minorities, gays, the disabled and other groups from discrimination. Over the previous two decades, the ethnically Gallic country has pursued a policy of multiculturalism, although North African and Muslim immigration have recently raised nationalist sentiment and tested the country's embrace of multiculturalism. The French consider their society and social policies to be progressive. They are accustomed to racial, religious, and ethnic diversity; they have long received international visitors of all stripes. Racism and bigotry are shunned. Religious freedom is enshrined. Women's rights are protected. LGBT rights are embraced. Although France may have enlightened policies, this does not mean every person there shares these ideals.

Travelers can explore some of the [Best Places to Visit in France](#). Recognized as a [World Bank High-Income Country](#), the average [Numbeo Cost of Living in France](#) is 6% higher than in the United States (aggregate data for all cities, rent is not taken into account). However, if you plan on renting, expect monthly costs for a single person to be around 35% less than in the U.S. On the micro level, the average cost for a three-course meal for 2 at a mid-range restaurant is between 40-91USD (about 35-80 EUR) while a meal at an inexpensive one might cost about 15USD.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Review current travel risks for France:

- [U.S Department of State Travel Risks](#)
- [Safe Travel to France](#)

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) Open Doors Report 2019, 17,185 students from the United States studied abroad in France, a roughly 4.4% increase from the previous year recorded.

ETHNIC MINORITIES IN FRANCE

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR:

Students of color planning to study abroad in France will find a country that is very knowledgeable of life in the U.S. and some find France to be less prejudiced, in general, than many parts of the U.S. However, according to a 2017 survey, 53% of the French survey participants believe the number of immigrants in their country is too high. This sentiment has led to some people of color and foreign travelers to feel stigmatized, and it is likely to experience some form of prejudice while abroad. Racism in France is different than in the U.S. and a recent article by *Frenchly* suggests [it's not about skin color](#). However, some African-American travelers have written about the [complications of experiencing France](#).

NOTES:

- In Paris there are businesses and retailers who sell goods and services specific to ethnic communities.
- An increase in ethnic profiling in abusive police identity checks and in the deaths of Black youths by police has started a crusade similar to the Black Lives Matter Movement in the U.S. Rokhaya Diallo, an Afro-Parisienne journalist, antiracism activist, and award-winning filmmaker, created a documentary: [Not Yo Mama's Movement](#) that documents the recent emerging generation of black activists.
- Outside of Paris, students not of European descent studying may have difficulty finding certain beauty products found in the United States.
- Despite the recent drop in racist acts, France has seen a [rise in anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim violence](#).
- Students of color should carry a copy of identification (or information confirming the traveler's purpose in the country) to show authorities in the event of being racially profiled.
- Students of color report generally feeling welcomed in the country and incidents of discrimination on tourists are rare.

- According to the [2018 Annual Report on Hate Crimes](#) published by the National Police, authorities reported 1838 hate crimes recorded by police. The report categorized 913 of the hate crimes as racism and xenophobia. The government effectively investigated hate crimes and prosecuted the perpetrators.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Je Suis Noir](#), “The Stoop,” a podcast on being black in France
- [France Doesn’t See Race \(Officially\). A Blackface Performance Challenged That.](#), The Atlantic
- [‘Black and treated as such’: France’s anti-racism protests expose myth of colour-blind Republic](#), France24
- [IES Abroad France Diversity Resources](#), IES Abroad (see “Race, Ethnicity, & National Identity”)
- [An Asian-American in France](#), IES Abroad blog
- [What it means to be Black in Paris](#), Travel Noire
- [A Complicated Love Affair: Being Chinese American in France](#), Oh She Goes Blog

SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN FRANCE

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER OR QUEER STUDENTS:

French society is highly tolerant and upholds LGBT rights. It has recognized same-sex civil unions since 1999. Laws protect individuals and groups from all hate crimes and discrimination based on sexuality. LGBT travelers should feel accepted and safe as there are many businesses, gay clubs, bars, and other LGBT-friendly amenities across France. LGBT students in France will likely be able to find a community of friends, groups, organizations, and establishments. This is true across the country, but particularly so in Paris.

NOTES:

- Most gay, lesbian, bi and transsexual associations, social clubs and support groups are based in Paris. Many are multilingual: [Le Centre Lesbien, Gai, Bi et Trans](#); [SOS Homophobie](#) (Legal counsel for victims of homophobia)
- Pride marches are widespread around France during the summer months celebrating the LGBT community.
- However, across Europe, we still see discrimination, intimidation and persecution of marginal groups. The French government has launched an [action plan to fight hate against LGBT people](#)

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Global Gayz](#), A gay-owned charitable travel and culture website focused on LGBT life in countries around the world
- [10 Things you didn't know about gay Paris](#), The Local-French Newspaper
- [Student Reflections on LGBT Issues in France](#), Northeastern University Global Experience Office
- [How Safe are LGBT Couples in France](#), Tripsavvy
- [Travel Gay Europe](#)
- [LGBT Travel Information, U.S. Passports & International Travel](#) (see Local Laws & Special Circumstances)
- [Frommer’s Tips for Gay & Lesbian Travelers](#)
- [Gay Tourism](#), The Leading Global Resource in the LGBT Tourism Industry
- [LGBTQIA rights and resources gathered on an \(incomplete\) map of the world](#), many popular study abroad destinations are featured
- [Lonely Planet LGBTQ Traveler guide](#) for France
- [IES Abroad France Diversity resources](#) (see “Gender & Sexuality”)

PHYSICAL DISABILITY IN FRANCE

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES:

Students with disabilities who study abroad in France will find a broad range of services and accommodations. In modern areas and establishments, there are sidewalk ramps, dropped curbs, accessible facilities and the like. Students with disabilities who study at and live on French campuses will likely find a level of general accommodations similar to those that they can expect in the U.S.

However, France takes pride in its history and architecture, so many buildings in France are centuries old and may have limited disabled accommodations. Before selecting a study abroad program option it is best to inquire with the program itself whether a destination offers specific services. The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in several sectors or the provision of other state services. The government not only provides programmatic services and increased access to information for those with disabilities but also effectively enforces applicable laws.

NOTES:

- France does not quarantine cats and dogs that meet the certain requirements from approved countries ([Pet Travel](#)). All requirements also apply to [service and emotional support animals](#) when traveling abroad.
- Medical facilities in France, including emergency response services, frequently do not meet international standards and may lack medicine and supplies: Although you can purchase many prescription and non-prescription medications at pharmacies, some common U.S. medications may not be available and thus it is recommended by the [U.S. Dept. of State Bureau of Consular Affairs](#) that travelers carry prescription medication in original packaging, along with a doctor's prescription. As a precaution, travelers should check with the U.S. Embassy website to find a list of medical facilities.
- Many restaurants, hotels, and tourism sites feature accommodations for the disabled.
- If students are hearing impaired, or traveling with someone who has a hearing impairment, they should check with potential hosts to determine whether they have: visual adaptation aids for telephone ringers, smoke alarms, fire alarms, doorbell, audio loop systems, amplification on telephone handsets and televisions with teletext.
- For travelers with visual impairment, it is important to check whether accommodations welcome their guide dog, as well as: having markings denoting changes in floor space and height, braille instructions for appliances and controls and use of large print.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Tracing the Steps of a Deaf Leader Through France](#), Mobility International USA - provides resources for Americans Traveling Abroad with Disabilities
- [Information for Students with Disabilities Traveling Abroad](#), U.S. Department of State (see section under Local Laws & Special Circumstances)
- [Wheelchair Traveling](#)
- [Wheelchair Accessible Travel Guide](#), Wheelchair Travel: Open Your World
- [Traveling with Disabilities and Medications](#), Transportation Security Administration
- [The Lonely Planet Guide to Accessible travel in France](#)

RELIGION IN FRANCE

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS STUDENTS:

As French society has increased in ethnic diversity, so too has its religious diversity. Although the country is predominantly Roman Catholic, for most this is a nominal designation. Like in other developed countries, the number of regular church worshippers continues to dwindle. During the same time, there has been a growth in the number of worshippers of Islam, which is practiced there primarily by North African and Middle Eastern immigrant enclaves. There are also small significant Protestant and Jewish populations.

The liberalism of French national policies around the question of protections for religious expression was tested as it decided whether or not, as a matter of public safety, to ban the public use of burqas, Islamic garb worn by women that covers all but the eyes. French Muslims widely considered it an affront to religious freedom and to Islam. Contentious as relations between the sizeable Muslim community and the wider French society may be, there are hundreds of mosques across France, where faithful practice openly and in peace.

NOTES:

- Although France is mainly Roman Catholic, a variety of houses of worship – churches, mosques, synagogues – exist in Paris in other metropolitan areas of the country.
- While religion is a hot-button issue in France, the French tend to enjoy intellectual discussion and generally encourage vigorous debates on political and cultural matters.
- Discrimination based on religion is rare; freedom and tolerance of various religions is widely accepted and practiced.
- In recent years, some increased reports of anti-Semitic attacks have been reported.
- Religious travelers should feel encouraged to celebrate their personal religious beliefs.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Faith-Based Travel Information](#), U.S. Passports & International Travel
- [Top 15 Kosher Restaurants in France](#), Yeah That’s Kosher
- [Catholics and Cultures](#) - France
- [Synagogues in France](#), Kosher Delight
- [Jewish Virtual Library](#) - France
- [Prayer Times](#), Islamic Finder
- [Religion in France](#), Best Country: Always There Where You Are
- [Kahal](#), Your Jewish Home Abroad
- [IES Abroad France Diversity resources](#) (see “Religion & Spirituality”)

WOMEN IN FRANCE

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FEMALE STUDENTS:

France is not only one of the most traveled-to destinations among U.S. students, but is also a safe and easy country to travel. Women traveling solo will generally feel safe nearly anywhere they go. Pickpocketing is the most prevalent form of crime targeting tourists in the French capital. While Paris is statistically a safe place for women, many women travelers have been encouraged to avoid smiling at or making prolonged eye contact with men who travelers do not know: in France, this may be interpreted as an invitation to make advances.

NOTES:

- France ranked 12th (out of 149 countries) in the [2018 Global Gender Gap Index](#) conducted by the World Economic Forum.
- France is usually safe to travel around alone, including for women travelers. However, since women travelers have been more likely to be targets of high risk crimes, it is recommended that travelers are vigilant of their surroundings and make a conscious effort to travel in groups as often as possible.
- After recent terrorist attacks around Europe, some travelers have may wondered is [Paris safe for tourists after recent attacks](#). While there has been an increase in violence, women travelers should feel generally safe moving around France.
- The law criminalizes rape, including spousal rape and prohibits sexual harassment and provides civil penalties.
- Feminine hygienic products are the same type and variety you would find in the US. Tampons and pads are easily available at small and large grocery stores and pharmacies.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Pink Pangea](#), The Community for Women Who Love to Travel
- [Travel Tips for Women Travelers in France](#), World Nomads
- [Extra Tips for Solo Tips Women Travelers](#), Rick Steve’s Europe Blog
- [Information for Women Travelers](#), U.S. Passports & International Travel
- [Curbing Violence Against Women in France](#), TRT World
- [7 Privileges I was Made Aware of By Traveling](#), Huffington Post

REFERENCES

Maps, flag and country facts are from the [CIA World Factbook 2019](#) Online
[CIA World Factbook](#) | [IIE Open Doors Report](#) | [Lonely Planet France](#)

Please note: The content within the resources provided were last reviewed in July 2020 and as such could have changed. Views expressed in links provided or in sub-links within the document do not necessarily reflect the views of the Purchase Office for Global Education (OGE).