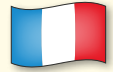




PROGRAM COUNTRY: FRANCE



STS – more than 50 years of experience in student exchange programs all over the world



France has a great variety of landscapes, a long coastline, a large diversity of monuments, a prestigious culture and a rich heritage. It explains why, every year, over 75 millions enthusiastic tourists visit France. Be more than a tourist next year! Choose to be a “local” and experience “la vie à la française”.

COUNTRY INFORMATION

Close your eyes and try to imagine you are driving across France. Your starting point is the windy Dunkerque, small harbour by the Belgian border, where the Flamish heritage is still very noticeable. Cross the Picardie, the Garden of France. Slowly, the pointed top of what became the symbol of France thought out the world, the Eiffel Tower, and all of a sudden you realize you have reached the capital of fashion and romance, Paris.

Leave the tumult of the big city and reach the countryside again, but this time it is covered with vineyards! Yes, France is definitely the country of wine! The ground is becoming stiffer and the temperatures lower, which announces that the Massif Central is getting closer! Time to stop for some Roquefort cheese. Leave the mountains behind and head to the sea again! The temperatures are now getting warmer and the larks louder as you reach the Mediterranean sea and the colourful port of Marseille!

Throughout history, France has been shaped by the arts and philosophy. The Cradle of the Enlightenment, France influenced the American Revolution, and through the French revolution it gave impetus to and set an example for democracy in the world, developing the values of freedom, equality, fraternity, and since 1905, secularism. French culture and language is represented on all continents.

France is the oldest of all major European states. France was once a monarchy, but now has its 5th Republic. French is the official language of the Republic, but 77 regional “languages” are still alive. The most well-known ones are Basque, Breton, Corsican, Provençal and Alsatian.

France has a growing population of 64 million on 543,965 km². It is the biggest state in the European Union. There are five cities including suburbs (Nice, Nantes, Toulon, Strasbourg and Bordeaux) that have over half a million inhabitants. Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Lille and Toulouse have more than one million people.

Even though cities are fast-growing, France is still a rural country.

Despite the fact that most Frenchmen (65%) nowadays are either agnostic or atheist, France’s main religion, Catholicism, still greatly influences the culture of the country. It, for example, shows in the bank holidays and private schools : most of them are Catholic.

As France lies at the crossroads of Northern and Southern Europe, its climate very much varies from region to region. France has oceanic weather (mild summers and rainy winters) in the North-west, continental (warm summers and cold winters) in the North-east and Mediterranean (warm summers and mild winters) in the South.

Food is very important in France! The day starts with a sweet breakfast. A typical breakfast would be “baguette”, “petit pain au chocolat” or “croissant” and a hot drink (coffee or tea). Lunch is the biggest meal of the day. It is usually a three course meal. Dinner is usually a family dinner, but a bit lighter. The French love to cook all sorts of dishes, especially meat. Try the “poulet basquaise”, “coq au vin”, “lapin au pruneaux” or “boeuf bourguignon”. However, vegetarians will always be able to find fresh greens. Did you know that France is the third producer of fruit and vegetable in the EU? And of course, those with a sweet tooth will enjoy all the delicious patisseries such as “mille feuilles”, “macarons”, “religieuses” etc.

Though the host families live everywhere in France, a great proportion are around Paris, Lille, Lyon and Bordeaux. Throughout the year, STS organizes meetings, weekends and trips to make the most of the stay. The student can choose between a bimester, trimester, semester or a full schoolyear.

SCHOOL LIFE

The French school year starts early September to end in June, and is divided in three terms. About every seven weeks, there is a two- week break. The French high school, “le lycée”, is three years long. The first year, “la seconde”, offers a general programme with French, maths, history, geography, sciences and physical education, along with a few options for about 30 hours per week. The second and third year, “la première” and “la terminale”, are specialized in



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one field of study (literature, social studies or science) and leads to the famous final exam : “le Baccalauréat”.

Lunch is taken at “la cantine”. The lunch break lasts at least one hour, but very often two hours. A school day starts around 8 am and can finish as late as 6 pm. There is usually one afternoon off per week (most of the time on Wednesdays). In France, the students may have classes on Saturday mornings. No uniforms are required, not even in the private schools.

The French educational system is highly oriented towards structured learning, with emphasis on traditional teaching techniques designed to help students attain required standards and pass exams. It is known to be hard but it is very rewarding as it gives the students the tools to develop critical thinking. French State Education is well-organized, well-funded, and with generally average to high standards in comparison to other European countries.

A class normally consists of 30–35 pupils. The teachers expect the exchange student to do his or her best, but will take into account the fact that it of course can be difficult to study in a foreign language. With hard work and effort, all students will surely succeed.

French schools do not offer many extra-curriculum activities, but the towns offer all kinds of clubs.

About 20% of the French high schools are private. Founded and run by the Catholic church, they do not expect students to attend any religious course or event if they do not wish to. The cost is mostly covered by the state. There is no difference in the curriculum, but the student to teacher ratio is lower here.

HOST FAMILY LIFE

French families are close-knit units. Meals are important and taken together. As in most latin countries, the word of elders is to be respected, and teenagers are very much supervised in their schoolwork and outings. The student will be required to keep his or her room tidy and participate in everyday life.

In most families both parents work. The help from the children is therefore very welcomed by the mother, who usually cooks. As any member of the family, we suggest the student offers to help in the kitchen. The host mother will be pleased to hear some culinary advice and might even ask the student to cook something from its country. This program is a genuine exchange! Dinner is also the time to share the day with the other members of the family.

The host family will consider the student a member of the family and hopes to experience a great cultural exchange. All the families volunteer, meaning that they do not receive any financial compensation to host a student, just the joy of having the student among them.

French families enjoy a great deal of traditions. The host family will introduce the student to family traditions such as, for example,

“la Galette des Rois”, a crusty cake filled with almonds or apples, eaten early January to celebrate the visit of the three Kings to Jesus; or “la Chandeleur”, crêpes made and tossed on mardi gras with a coin in hand to bring good luck.

Most families have a pet, sometimes several. There are 60 million pets in France, and they are considered as members of the family. We hope the student likes pets too !

Also, depending on where they live, the student will experience a local specific culture. A high school year in Burgundy is different from one in Provence, from one in Normandy and so on.

PROGRAM EXTRAS

To help the student discover the amazing beauty and the cultural jewels of France, optional trips are organized throughout the year. Weekend mini-trips are planned to discover cities like Paris, Lille, Lyon or perhaps Bordeaux, and to spend a day at Disneyland in Paris, depending on the student’s wishes. We will do our best to offer the students the very best of France !

PREP COURSE FRANCE

STS France offers all students to attend a preparation course as a great start to the exchange in France. The course is held on a beautiful private high school campus, about one hour west of Paris. Students attending the prep course have a wonderful time meeting people from all over the world while, learning about the French way of life, the culture and language. Last but not least, the students get the opportunity to spend time in Paris, the City of Lights. Please see separate sheet for more detailed information regarding the Prep Course.

EUROPEAN TOUR

In the end of June, STS Head Office offers a three-week bustour around Europe. You get to visit 10 countries together with students from all over the world. The price includes accommodation, half board, sightseeing, most entrances and activities, Disneyland in Paris etc. Please see separate sheet for more detailed information regarding the tour.



All information is subject to change.

