

France

Destination Guide

Contents




France has amazing beaches, mountains that seem to be made for skiing, a rich culture and world famous cuisine. With so much to see, It's no wonder France is the most visited country in the world. Drive through the countryside to enjoy the castles, historical cities and vineyards. Enjoy the enchanting villages and ancient walled cities of the north, the astonishing châteaux of the Loire Valley, wines from Bordeaux and the endless, gleaming beaches along the southern coast. This plus the magical cities of Paris, Lyon, Marseille and more. Auto Europe has collected everything you need to know about taking a self drive holiday in France. Bon voyage!

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Renting a Car in France

Class	Fuel Capacity	Type	Transmission	Fuel/Air Cond.
M = Mini	0.8 - 1.0	B = 2 Door	M = Manual	R = Yes
E = Economy	1.0 - 1.4	D = 4 Door	A = Automatic	N = No
C = Compact	1.2 - 1.6	C = 2/4 door	N = Manual 4WD	D = Diesel Air
F = Full size	2.0 - 3.2	L = Limousine	C = Manual AWD	Q = Diesel No Air
P = Premium	2.0 - 4.2	S = Sports Car	B = Auto 4WD	H = Hybrid Air
L = Luxury	2.0 - 4.2	T = Convertible	D = Auto AWD	I = Hybrid No Air
X = Special	1.2 - 3.0	J = All Terrain	Examples: ECMN: E = Economy C = 2 or 4 door M = Manual N = No Aircon FDAR: F = Full Size D = 4 Door A = Automatic R = Aircon	E = Electric Air
		R = Recreational		C = Electric No Air
		F = 4 Wheel Drive		
		X = Special		
		K = Commercial Van/Truck		
		P = Ute		
		X = Special		
		E = Executive		

How do I know which vehicle is right for me?

When selecting a rental vehicle, take into consideration where you will be travelling, how many people will be travelling in the vehicle, luggage size and the kind of driving you intend to do. Auto Europe offer a vast range of vehicles from small economy sizes to larger full-sized cars, 4WDs, convertibles and luxury vehicles. The ACRISS system above will help you find a car that suits your needs. This is an internationally recognised code which will ensure you get the same standard of vehicle wherever you rent.

As a general rule of thumb, smaller cars are better in most European countries, as some roads were made before the general use of cars, so lanes can be very narrow and winding. Diesel can save you money on fuel costs and can be requested for hire and guaranteed for an additional cost.

Automatic and Manual Transmissions

Both automatic and manual vehicles are available France. Automatic vehicles are generally more expensive than manual cars and may be scarcer at smaller depots.

Do I need a credit card to collect my vehicle?

Yes. A credit card will be needed when collecting, which will be used for a security bond. The deposit is generally the insurance excess of the rental car which depends on the category of vehicle you have booked and the rate type.

Should I hire a GPS for driving in France?

GPS units can be requested direct with some suppliers, which will be charged at their own rates.

Collecting at an airport in France

At most German airports, rental companies will have a desk in the arrivals hall and vehicles will be located within walking distance. However, at smaller airports you may be required to collect your vehicle from a downtown depot. Usually a courtesy transfer will be provided from the airport to the depot in this instance. Auto Europe New Zealand offer all-inclusive prices which generally include any location/airport fees that may otherwise apply. Remember to check at time of booking to ensure your rental price will include all airport fees.

Rental Vehicle Insurance



Rental Vehicle Insurance

French law requires all vehicles to have Compulsory Third Party (CTP) insurance, although your car rental supplier should already have comprehensive insurance covering their vehicles. In the case of an accident, it must be reported to the insurance provider immediately and an excess will be due.

Car hire companies in France will normally include:

- **Third Party Insurance and Compulsory Insurance:** This will be included in your car hire price. This covers other people's injury and any damage to their vehicle.
- **Collision Damage Waiver (CDW):** This limits your financial liability for damage to the rented vehicle and is normally included in prepaid car hire prices. Rentals are usually subject to liability excess, which can be reduced at the time you collect your rental car or by taking out **Auto Europe Excess Refund Insurance**.
- **Theft and Loss Cover:** This limits your financial liability for the loss or theft of the rented vehicle and is generally included in the prepaid car rental price.
- **Liability Insurance:** This limits your financial liability for bodily injury or death, and is normally included in the prepaid car hire price.
- **Personal Accident Insurance:** This covers the driver for personal injuries and is generally not included in your car rental rate. It is considered an optional extra that you can take out upon collection of the car.

Auto Europe Excess Refund Insurance

When renting a vehicle, the rental rates include basic insurance. However, in the event that the vehicle is stolen or accidentally damaged, there is usually an insurance excess amount which the driver is liable to pay to the rental company. To avoid any unexpected costs opt for Auto Europe Excess Refund Insurance which will offer a reimbursement for the supplier's damage and theft excess to a maximum for AU\$5,000. Simply add this onto your car rental booking prior to departure and you could save thousands of dollars in case of an accident. To find out more, simply call Auto Europe on 0800 885 052 or visit the [Auto Europe website](#).

The Auto Europe Hire Car Excess Refund Insurance is managed by Accident & Health International Underwriting Pty Limited, ABN 26 053 335 952, AFSL 238261 and underwritten by CGU Insurance Limited, ABN 27 004 478 371, AFSL 238291.

Driving in France

- Drive on the **right** hand side of the road, the driver sits on the left side of the car. Overtake on the left lane.
- If you park illegally you will receive a ticket. You can pay by buying a “timbre fiscal” (tax stamp) from a tobacconist, stick it on the ticket and mail it to the authorities. If you see the officer or warden you can pay them directly and keep the receipt. Most rental companies will bill you and apply a surcharge if you do not pay your tickets.
- Road tolls are common in France. Pick-up a machine-dispensed ticket upon entering the motorway and pay when you exit; don't lose the ticket or you will pay the maximum fee. You may pay with cash or credit.
- Signs at roundabouts will indicate which traffic flow priority. In the absence of a sign, the traffic entering the roundabout has priority.
- It is not necessary to drive within the city of Paris. The public transportation system in Paris is among the most efficient in the world and Paris is easily traversed on foot.
- Drinking and driving is a very serious offence. The blood alcohol limit is 0.05% and anything higher will incur severe penalties including imprisonment or confiscation of your licence. Be smart - don't drink and drive!
- Talking on a hand held device while driving is forbidden.
- Pedestrians and cyclist always have the right of way.
- In case of a breakdown, all vehicles must be equipped with a reflective jacket which must be worn when outside the vehicle, as well as a warning triangle, which should be placed 100 meters behind the vehicle to warn oncoming traffic. This should be provided with your rental car.
- Unless otherwise specified, the speed limits are 80 mph (130kph) on motorways, 68 mph (110 kph) on urban motorways, 55 mph (90 kph) outside built-up areas and 31mph (50 kph) in cities.
- The driver is responsible for all persons under the age of 14 years. Children under 12 years of age must be in the back seat. The law requires all children less than 135cm to use a child restraint appropriate to their weight and size. They are as follows:
 - Rearward-facing Baby Seat - Birth to 15mth/13kg
 - Forward-facing Child Seat - under 4 yrs/18 kg
 - Booster Seat - under 11/36 kg

Driving in France



Parking

Alternate side parking or “stationnement alterne semi-mensuel” means you can only park on one side of the road depending on the dates marked. On one way streets, you may only park on the left hand side of the road. Pay-and-display machines are common throughout France and parking is free from 7.00pm - 9.00am as well as weekends and public holidays, unless otherwise indicated.

Licence Requirements

A full driving licence is required to drive in France. All drivers must have held a full valid driving licence for a minimum of one year. New Zealand residents are required by law to have an international drivers licence. Contact your local motoring association for further information. Carry both your New Zealand and international driving licences with you when you travel, as some authorities may ask for additional confirmation of your license.

Min & Max Age Requirements

The minimum driving age in France is typically 18, though that may vary depending on the supplier and vehicle type. Drivers aged 18-24 years may be charged a young drivers surcharge. The majority of locations in France do not have a maximum driving age, however there may be restrictions for drivers aged 70-75 in some regions. In these situations, drivers in this age range may be required to hold a letter from their GP stating they are healthy and fit to drive. Check with Auto Europe for further details.

Cross Border Fees and One Way Rentals

Can I collect my rental car in France and drop it off in another European city?

International one ways are definitely possible however, as with any international one way, this will often incur a one way fee. Prices may vary depending on the supplier, the length of the rental and the drop off destination.

Can I collect my car in France, visit another European city, then return it to France?

Most car rental companies based in France will permit travel to other European countries without an additional charge. However, some suppliers do not allow luxury vehicles to enter Italy from France. There may also be restrictions on travel to some Eastern Europe countries. Some car hire suppliers permit travel to the UK by ferry for no additional fee, though the customer is required to cover the cost of the ferry.

How do I extend my rental after I've picked up the vehicle?

Once the car rental has commenced, you will have to call the depot where you initially collected the vehicle. If the vehicle is available to be extended, you will be offered additional days at the local rate.

Road Signs and Regions



Important Road Signs

Stop: *Arrêt*, a red, octagonal and says “*arrêt*” in the centre

Give Way: *Cédez le passage*, a triangle with red border and white centre.

Parking areas: A blue square with a white “P” in the centre.

No Parking: A red circle with diagonal line through the centre, and blue background.

No Vehicles Allowed: White and round with a red circle around the border.

One Way: *Le sens unique*, a blue sign with white arrow showing the flow of traffic.

No Passing: *Ne pas dépasser*, a red circle with a red car and black car in the centre, on a white background.

French Regions

Ile de France

Paris

Central France:

Centre-Loire, Auvergne, Limosin, Bourgogne

Northern France:

Picardy, Nord-Pas de Calais, Champagne Ardenne

Eastern France:

Lorraine, Alsace. Franche Comté

Southern France:

Aquitaine, Midi-Pyrénées, Languedoc-Roussillon, Provence Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Rhône-Alpes

Western France:

Basse-Normandie, Haute-Normandie, Brittany, Pays-de-la-Loire



Paris



Paris is known as the “City of Lights” and images of this world-famous metropolis holds a wealth of history and culture, which make it a spectacular location for sightseeing. Paris is a place where architectural and artistic heritage combine to make any visit an unforgettable experience. Savour exceptional Parisian cuisine, indulge in some of the best shopping in the world and enjoy fantastic nightlife. The Seine River weaves its way through the city and adds to Paris’ charm and romance. There is never a dull moment in Paris.

Attractions

Visit The Eiffel Tower - Completed in 1889, this is one of the world’s most recognizable and visited monuments

The Louvre Museum - One of the finest art museums in the world, home to thousands of classic and modern masterpieces including the celebrated Mona Lisa

The Cathedral of Notre Dame - An incredible example of French Gothic architecture and must see for any visitor

The Arc de Triomphe - Ordered by Napoleon in 1809, this iconic monument commemorates the challenges and victories of the French military

The Palace of Versailles - One of the largest and most opulent castles in the world and former home to the infamous Marie Antoinette

The Moulin Rouge - Take in a show at this world famous club, known as the birthplace of the can-can dance

The Champs-Élysées - Shop (or just browse) at some of the most high-end designer boutiques in this fashion world mecca, or relax in a traditional Parisian café for some excellent people watching

The Latin Quarter - Pop in and out of cafes for wine, cognac and coffee while soaking up the Parisian lifestyle

Les Invalides - Visit this magnificent museum dedicated to the military history of France and home to Napoleon Bonaparte’s extravagant grave

Events

January

Grande Parade de Paris - Watch this phenomenal New Year’s Day celebration complete with bands, dancing and more

May

Nuit des Musées - For one night, nearly every Parisian museum will open their doors for free in order for visitors to gain exposure to art and culture

June

Bastille Day - Head to the Bastille in the 11th arrondissement to celebrate France’s National Day

Fete de la Musique - Revel in the sweet sounds of traditional French music– among many other genres– at this June 21 event that hosts impromptu performances throughout the city

July

Fete des Tuileries - Check out this annual fun fair is hosted in Paris’ celebrated gardens near the Louvre

Paris Jazz Festival - Free (or inexpensive) jazz performances are hosted at different venues throughout the city every weekend in June and July

September

Fashion Week - Haute couture takes over the city with some shows accessible to the general public

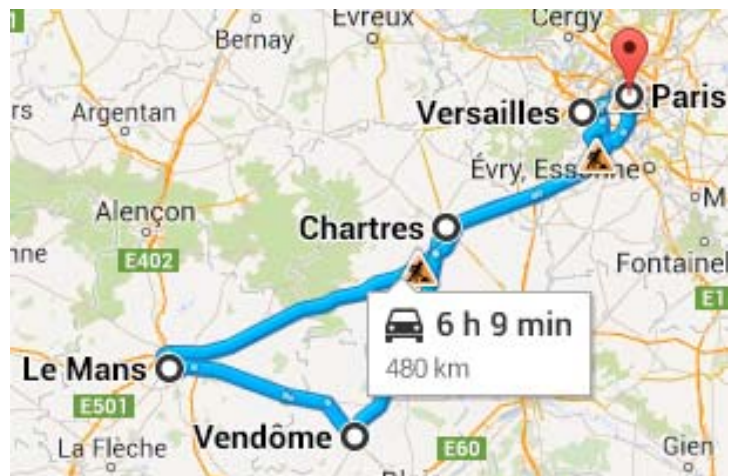
Self Drive Tours: Paris



Courts and Cars Tour

This self drive tour will take you to the small city of Chartres, just a one hour drive from Paris. Drive south west on the A11/E50, passing through the beautiful Centre-Val de Loire region, famous for its vineyards and châteaux. Visit the Chartres Cathedral and listen to the choir and organist or walk the labyrinth, commonly known as “The Road to Jerusalem”. Out of town, the same road will take you on to Le Mans, a gloriously restored old city with cobbled streets and half timbered houses,

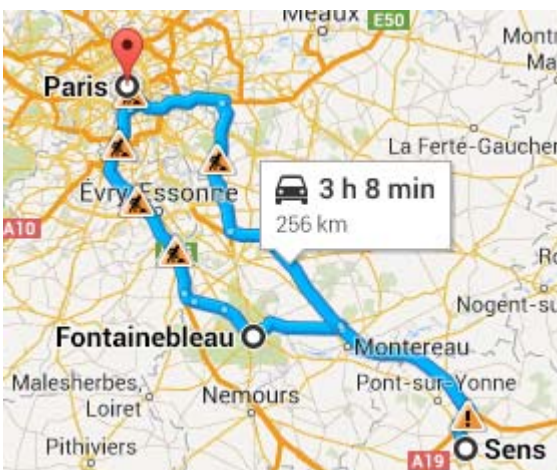
famous for the 24 Hours of Le Mans which is the world’s oldest endurance sports car race. From here, take the D357 to get to Vendôme. Sitting along the south side of the Loire River is the ruined castle of the counts of Vendôme. Though these structures were created in the 9th century, there are still numerous towers and walls to explore. The abbey is also worth a look, with its fine florid gothic style and 12th century belfry. Heading back on the N10 will take you to the magnificent Palace of Versailles and then back to Paris on the D10.



Back to Nature Tour

Drive south east from the centre of Paris on the A6/E15 for 60kms to Fontainebleau, a historic town with a breathtaking, UNESCO listed palace and surrounded by a vast, abundant forest. Formerly a royal hunting park, it

is now protected and well regarded by climbers for bouldering, a type of climbing without ropes. Within the forest are dozens of delightful French villages spotting the Seine River. Weave your way through these villages, stopping to taste a fresh croissant au chocolate or just enjoying the pleasant atmosphere. Here you will also find historic châteaux, which previously served as the residences of kings. Take the D606 onto the N6 following the water to Sens where much activity awaits. Here you can visit the Serres Municipales (greenhouses). Best of all, it’s free to visit. When you’re ready to return to Paris, hop on the A5/E54.



Central France

The central region of France is dominated by the Loire Valley, which is easily one of the loveliest drives in France. Tour châteaux, vineyards, traditional French villages and extraordinary countryside in this highly acclaimed region of France. Don't miss the Massif Central, a rugged landscape of granite and hardened lava, with violet-coloured volcanic rock and deep river gorges that provide an almost prehistoric feel.

Attractions

Centre

Loire Valley - Visit one of the many wineries, sample some of the regions exceptional cheeses or discover a string of fairy tale châteaux

The Marais - Wander the spectacular gardens in Bourges and watch the gardeners as they tend their plots on the weekends

Auvergne

Chaîne des Puys - Also known as the "land of volcanoes", Auvergne has a jaw-dropping landscape and an array of activities, hike or take a hot air balloon ride over this incredible sight

Vichy - This luxurious spa town in Auvergne is famous for its sulfur springs, which attracts thousands of visitors annually

Limousin

Cruise the country - Select from the Creuse, Correze or Haute-Vienne, which combine form this region, for spectacular driving experiences

Bourgogne

Savour - Commonly known as "Burgundy", this region is most celebrated for the varietal of wine that bears its name; go wine tasting and explore the astonishing architecture and natural beauty that fills this region

Events

April

Le Printemps de Bourges - This major annual music festival takes place in restaurants and bars throughout Bourges

May

Joan of Arc Festival - Join the residents of Orléans as they don traditional attire and enjoy medieval food and activities in celebration of this heroic woman

Fête de la Fraise - Feast on fresh strawberries and strawberry treats in the town of Beaulieu, Limousin

July

Festival International d'Opéra Baroque - Head to Burgundy for one of the most celebrated opera festivals in Europe

October

Journées Gastronomiques de Sologne - A must-do for food enthusiasts, this event in the Loire Valley town of Romorantin sells an extraordinary selection of delicious local treats in this enormous celebration of French cuisine



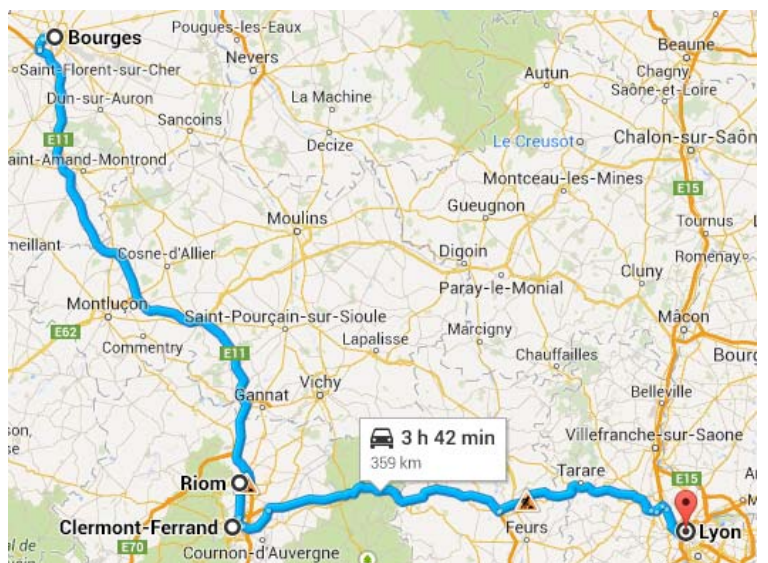
Châteaux and Vineyards Tour

Find out for yourself what everyone is talking about on this self drive tour covering France's famed wineries and monumental châteaux. From Paris, head south west on the E5 and join the A10 to Orléans, the medieval capital of France. Stroll along the banks of the Loire River and dine in the local restaurants. The Loire Valley is renowned for its beautiful architecture, fine wine vineyards and wonderful cuisine. Visit Chenonceau and the other phenomenal structures that occupy this region before touring the nation's celebrated vineyards. Out of Orléans, join the E60 heading south west. Stop at the Château de Blois, a stunning

chateau once occupied by King Louis XII, before continuing to the city of Tours. While in Tours, visit the city's fantastic museums as well as the Basilique St-Martin and the Cathédrale St- Gatien.

Volcanoes and Vol-au-vents

Starting in the delightful town of Bourges, take the A71/E11 towards Clermont-Ferrand in the Massif Central, a region famous for the Chaîne des Puys (chain of volcanoes) which surrounds the city. Along the way, stop in Riom to see Renaissance architecture fashioned out of the local black volcanic stone. Head to the top of the town's 16th century clock tower for the best view. From here, continue just slightly south to Clermont-Ferrand to explore the city and the surrounding mountain range. Then travel east on the A72/E70 to France's second largest city, Lyon. Known as the culinary capital of France, Lyon is filled the country's finest chefs. It is also recognised for its professional soccer team, Olympique Lyonnais, so join the locals and attend a game at le Stade de Gerland.



Northern France



Northern France is home to a diverse landscape of dunes, white cliffs, crystal clear lakes and deep forests. This region is a bird lovers paradise and serves as a migratory route for many species. Northern France is a region filled with festivities and warm, welcoming locals. Monuments and belfries stand with Norman buildings and fortified constructions; this region holds a wealth of architectural heritage enhanced by its magnificent natural surroundings.

Attractions

Picardy

Notre Dame d'Amiens - A stunning UNESCO World Heritage site in this charming northern town

Hortillonnages - 300 hectares of floating markets and gardens in Amiens

Nord-Pas-de-Calais

Musee d'Art Moderne - Get personal with Picasso at this fantastic museum in Lille

Belfroi de Calais - Make your way to the top of this Belfry in Calais, itself a UNESCO World Heritage site, for incredible 360 views of the town

Champagne-Ardenne

Cathedral of Reims - Don't miss this iconic structure which served as the location for the crowning of 34 sovereigns, including 24 French kings

Épernay - Make this self-proclaimed "capitale du champagne" your base for touring the region's Champagne Routes

Le Cirque - The old town circus in Châlons-en-Champagne, which now functions as the prestigious National Circus Arts Centre, the only higher education institution of the circus arts in Europe

Events

April

International Kite Festival - Head to Berck-sur-Mer for this spectacular show of kites

June

La Fête des Roses - Roses cover nearly every corner of the medieval town of Gerberoy in Picardy, commonly referenced as being among the most beautiful towns in the country

July

La Route du Champagne - Attend this unique celebration of bubbly with events held across several towns in Champagne

Festival of the Giants - Travel to Douai in Nord-Pas-de-Calais for this unusual and highly entertaining, UNESCO listed family event

September

La Braderie - Don't miss this flea market extravaganza in Lille, featuring vendors from all over the world offering incredible bargains

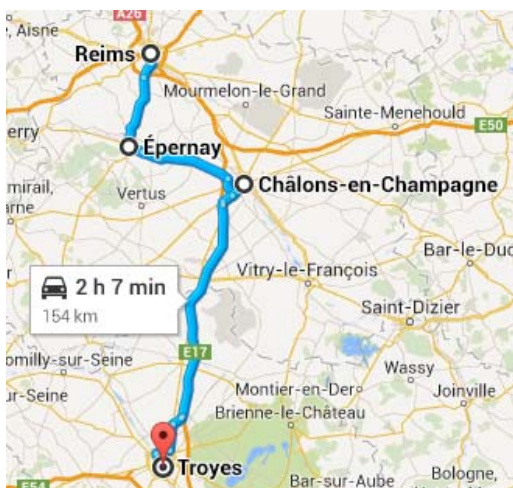
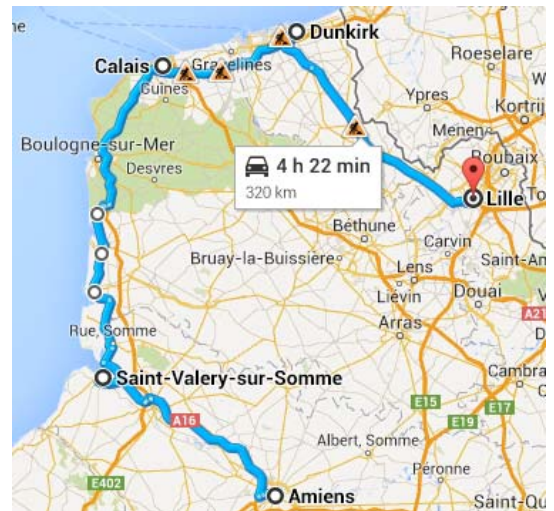
December

Marché de Noël - Traditional French Christmas markets are hosted in Lille and many other towns and cities



Route of Battlefield to Belfries

Start this tour in Amiens, where you can visit the town's famed cathedral and tour the former home of author Jules Verne. Follow the Somme River toward the English Channel down D3 to the medieval village of Saint-Valery-sur-Somme. Here you can stroll along the boardwalk and visit beaches famous for the WWI battle held in this location. Travel north along the coast and take in the spectacular cliffs of Côte d'Opale on the D940 to Calais. On a clear day here you can see England's White Cliffs of Dover. If you're in the mood for shopping, head to the huge Cite Europe shopping centre. From Calais, continue along the coast to Dunkirk, home to the largest sea evacuation in military history during WWII. Journey north to the Belgian border from here by taking the A25/E42 to Lille, France's fourth largest city. Lille possesses much of the charm and wonder of Paris without the crowds or the price tag. If you'd like to continue into Belgium, the nation's capital of Brussels in a short one hour and fifteen minute drive away.



Champagne of Kings Tour

Begin this drive in Reims, where many French kings have started their reign. This is also the location in which the German High Command formally surrendered in WWII. From Reims, drive right into the heart of the Champagne region in the town of Épernay. To get there, take the D951 to the Route Touristique de Champagne. Tour the extraordinary vineyards of this region and taste true French champagne. When you're ready to depart, drive a short distance on the D3 to Châlons-en-Champagne and pass through the Porte Sainte-Croix, just as Marie-Antoinette did on her way to marry the King Louis XVI. Visit the old town circus, which currently operates as a prestigious centre for the circus arts. From here, travel south on the A26/E17 to the city of Troyes, which is appropriately shaped like the cork of a Champagne bottle, its body defined by tree-lined boulevards and the rounded top encircled by the Seine River. While in Troyes, stroll past the city's incredible 16th century homes and visit the Maison de l'Outil de la Pensée Ouvrière, a museum dedicated to an incredible array of hand tools, documenting the evolution of industrialisation.

Eastern France



Eastern France is one of the country's best kept secrets and home to many beautiful buildings, prestigious honours and treasures to discover. Situated along the borders of Germany, Switzerland and Italy, Eastern France has developed a blend of cultural influences. It is a nature lovers paradise with abundant wildlife and phenomenal landscape, including the Vosges Mountains and plenty of navigable waterways. In Eastern France, you'll never run short of wonderful things to see and do.

Attractions

Alsace

Petite-France - Visit this delightful part of Strasbourg, located on the Grande Île, where the river divides, flowing through neighbourhoods filled with homes that seem to have been pulled from the pages of a fairy tale

Cité de l'Automobile - Home to the Schlumpf Collection of classic automobiles, this museum in Mulhouse holds the largest collection of Bugatti automobiles in the world

Franche-Comté

Jura Mountains - Head to this sensational mountain range along the Swiss-French border for some peace and quiet or outdoor adventure

The Belfort Lion - Spend a day or two in the town of Belfort, where you can visit the town's famous, 22m long stone lion

Lorraine

World Peace Centre, Episcopal Palace - Don't miss this historical landmark in Verdun to reflect on peace and human rights

Saint Stephen Cathedral - With more than 6500m of windows, this cathedral in Metz is the most luminous in France

Place Stanislas - Visit the magnificent, UNESCO listed city centre of Nancy, where you can see the city's Opéra-Theatre, City Hall and Fine Arts Museum

Events

April

Le Grand Concours du Monde - This international wine competition takes place each year in Strasbourg

May-September

Soirées Folkloriques - Head to Colmar for traditional Alsatian music and dancing every Tuesday night throughout the summer

August

Mirabelle Festival - This festival in Metz celebrates the Mirabelle plum, a specialty of Lorraine

September

Strasbourg European Fantastic Film Festival - This annual festival is devoted to science fiction, horror and fantasy films

Besançon International Music Festival - Take in chamber music, symphonies and other classical music performances in Franche-Comté's capital

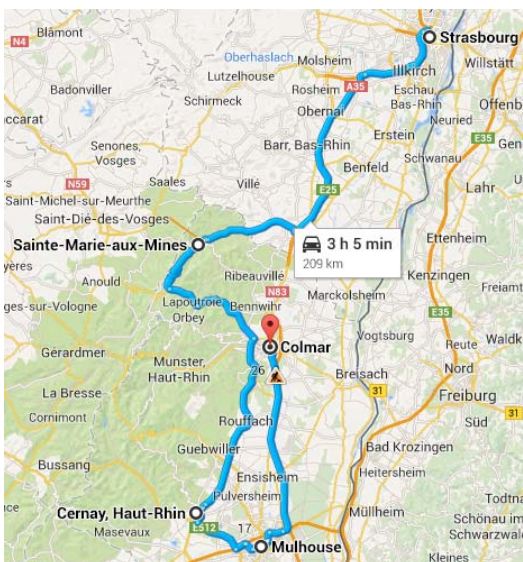
December

Christmas Market - Strasbourg's *Marché de Noël* is home to the oldest and largest Christmas market in France

Self Drive Tours: Eastern France



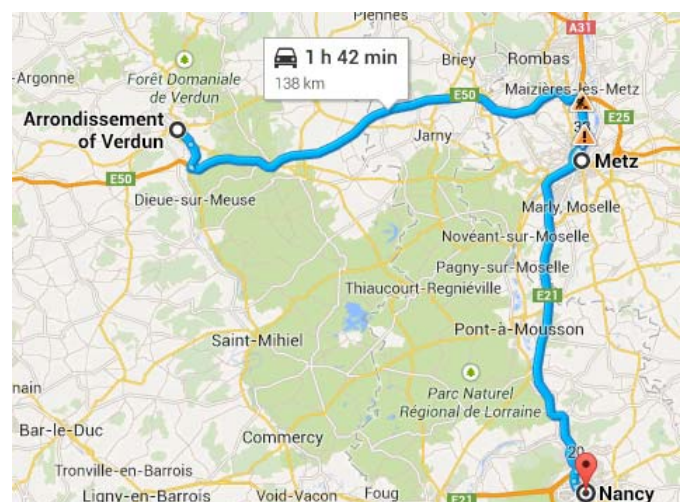
Cultural Fusion Tour



The border town of Strasbourg is where the distinct lines between French and German culture begin to blur and a fascinating fusion of traditions, cuisine and even language emerge. The historic city centre, known as the “Grande Ile”, was the first city to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Take the A35 south through the Vosges Mountains on the Route des Crêtes, an 89km road through these mountains connecting Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines and Cernay. Drive slightly south east on the E512 and A36 to the eclectic and creative city of Mulhouse. After absorbing the delights of Mulhouse, take the A35/E25 north to Colmar, a stunningly beautiful, well preserved city. While in Colmar, the capital of France’s famed Alsace wine region, don’t miss Petit Venise, a historic and undeniably charming part of this great town. If you’d like to continue your journey through Eastern France, head back to Strasbourg and follow the Route des Vins for some of the country’s best wine and culture.

Reflection and Art Tour

Start this tour in the old town of Verdun, formerly one of France’s strongest fortresses and the front line location during WWI. From here, take the D603 onto the N3 to Metz. Metz is a city full of smooth waterways and shaded parks, boulevards lined with cafés and Michelin starred restaurants. Visit the Centre-Pompidou Metz for the city’s finest collection of modern art, before sauntering through the Quartier Impérial, Metz’s old town. Continue on to Nancy, heading south along the N57, winding along the Moselle River and Pont-A-Mousson. Nancy a hub of art and architecture. Make sure to visit some of the city’s incredibly well curated museums and remarkable churches.





Southern France

With quick access to Spain and Italy, this region of France is perfect for self drive holidays. The vast countryside includes Europe's largest maritime-pine forest, Les Landes, and France's highest peak, Mont Blanc. You'll also find numerous UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Southern France. The coast is lined with turquoise waters, luxury Riviera resorts, chic cities, fascinating harbours and colourful fishing villages. Discover the French Alps, the largest skiing area in the world and home to world famous resorts and tiny villages nestled in to the mountains and valleys.

Attractions

Aquitaine

Bordeaux - Visit the celebrated wineries, 18th century palaces and inviting cafés on narrow, cobbled streets

The Caves of the Vézère Valley - Visit these amazing prehistoric animal paintings on the UNESCO WHS list

La Roque-Gageac - A magnificent village built into a golden limestone cliff sitting along side the Dordogne river; don't miss the troglodyte caves up above

Côte d'Azur

Calanques of Cassis - A popular spot for swimming, snorkelling and rock climbing

Languedoc-Roussillon

Carcassonne - See the largest medieval city in Europe, encircled by magical towers and battlements

Midi-Pyrénées

Toulouse - Don't miss this beloved French city, known as the "ville rose", which also serves as the capital of the region

Provence

Palais de Papes (Papal Palace) - Stop by this incredible 15th Century palace in Avignon

Aix-en-Provence - A traveller favourite, this small city is filled with beautiful 18th century fountains, elegant architecture, winding streets and lively markets

Events

February

Lemon Festival - Head to Menton to see sculptures and floats made from lemons and oranges in this enormous celebration of citrus

May

Cannes Film Festival - Travel to the coastal city of Cannes to catch a glimpse of the film world's finest at this prestigious event

July

Grand Falconer's Festival - Don't miss this major medieval festival in Cordes-sur-Ciel

August

Béziers Feria - This five day bull fighting event brings about one million people to Béziers annually; once the show has concluded for the day, people take to the streets for music, dance and more

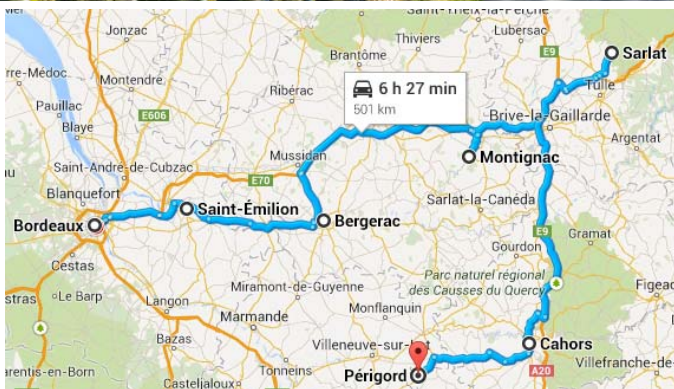
November

Chestnut Festival - Visit the delightful seaside town of Cagnes-sur-Mer for delicious roasted chestnuts, mulled wine and more

December

Fete des lumières - Lyon's Place des Terreaux hosts a spectacular light show and local homes place candles in their window to celebrate this annual event

Self Drive Tours: Southern France

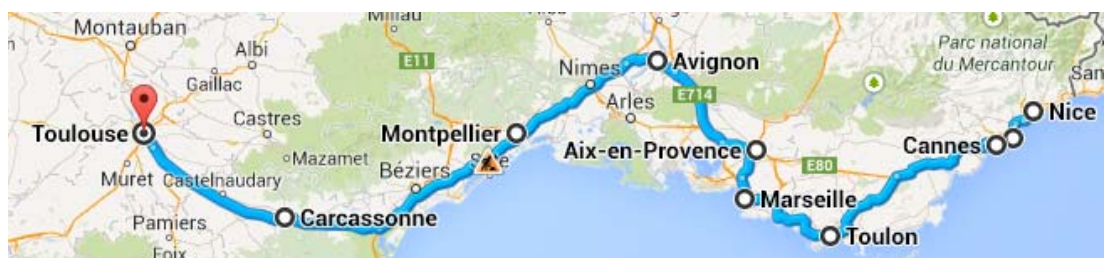


Wines, Castles & Caves Tour

Start this road trip in Bordeaux and head north east to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Saint-Émilion on the E70 to visit one of France's principal red wine regions. From here take the D936, following Dordogne river to Bergerac, the largest and most important town in this area. Check out the Chateau de Bridoire and more of

this town's fabulous historical architecture. From here, take the E70 north and then east to Montignac, where you can see this area's famous prehistoric cave paintings. Hop back on the E70 to Sarlat, a French country town that is home to an impressive amount of historical buildings and ancient art work and caves. From here, take the E70 back to the A20/E09 and head south to Cahors, an area that has been recognised for its incredible black wine since the middle ages. Slightly south west of here is Périgord, a historic area noted for its

The Grand Tour: French Riviera



Spend a few days in the terrific city of Nice,

before taking the coastal road from Nice to Antibes. Enjoy the Picasso Museum, stunning beaches and the old town of Antibes before continuing on the coastal road town to Cannes. Stroll along the winding, cobbled streets and enjoy the seaside, restaurants and nightlife of Cannes. When you're ready to continue, take the A8 to the A57 and head into Toulon. Enjoy the city's beaches, museums and gorgeous parks before heading to Marseille on the A50. Situated on the Mediterranean Sea, Marseille is one of France's oldest cities and the second largest port in Europe. See the Vieux Port, Boulevard Longchamp and Le Panier while in town. From there, take the E712 to Aix-en-Provence and explore the fantastic regional markets. Take the A8 onto the A7 to Avignon to see the Place du Papes and the town's famous bridge, then cross the Rhone on the N100 then join the A9 to visit the wonderful cities of Nimes and Montpellier. Out of town take the E15 and continue on the A61/E80 to the city of Carcassonne and visit the fortress, which was fully restored in 1853 it is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Take the A61 towards the mesmerising city of Toulouse, where you will find an endless selection of historical sites, modern and traditional restaurants, and entertainment for all ages.



Western France

For many, Western France is the first port of call on a driving holiday. This region is rich in gastronomy as fresh fish, shellfish, duck and dairy are in abundance. It is the birth place of many of France's famous cheeses and is home to a sophisticated landscape of manors, castles, neat orchards, stud farms, thatched cottages and tall hedgerows. The drink of choice is Calvados, an apple brandy rarely seen outside of France. Take a journey through the western peninsula of Brittany and discover the Celtic heritage displayed through the language, customs and dress of this region.

Attractions

Normandy

The D-Day beaches - Visit this famous site that served as the landing spot for the invasion and liberation of Europe from Nazi Germany

Caen - Travel to this town to see the magnificent Abbaye aux Hommes monastery and the Chateau de Caen, one of the largest medieval fortresses of Western Europe

Cider Route - Venture through the Pays d'Auge, just east of Caen for fresh, authentic French cider

Bayeux Tapestry - While it's not an actual tapestry, this woven piece of art is 70 metres long and its images chronicle the conquest of England in 1066

Mont Saint-Michel - A rocky islet topped by a famous gothic abbey, this is an architectural masterpiece and perfect day trip

Brittany

Saint-Malo - Walk the ramparts for a mind blowing view of the Emerald coast from this historic walled city

Quimper - Visit the Odet River, Cathedral St-Corentin and Musée des Beaux Arts, among other attractions in this enchanting village

Carnac - 3000 prehistoric standing stones dating from the Neolithic Age, the most extensive collection of its kind, are situated in Carnac

Events

January

Les Coquecigrues - This annual festival in Rennes hosts an array of theatrical performances along with music and other traditional French events

February/March

Granville Carnival - Head to Manche for Normandy's longest running street carnival

April

Tulip Festival - The Château de Vendevre hosts displays of over 30,000 tulips, grape hyacinths and narcissi

May

Jazz Under the Apple Trees - A annual festival in Coutances, featuring a fantastic and eclectic line up of jazz musicians from around the world

August

Blues du Château - An international Blues festival in La Chese, Côtes d'Armor which hosts a number of free performances

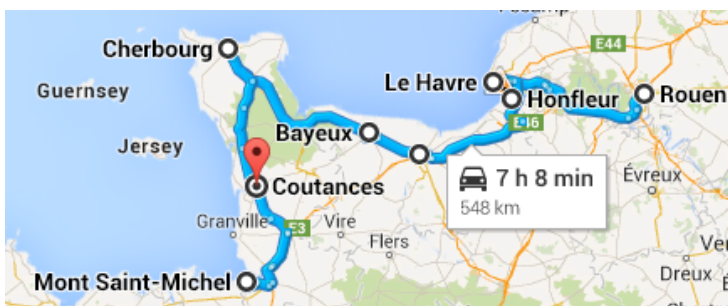
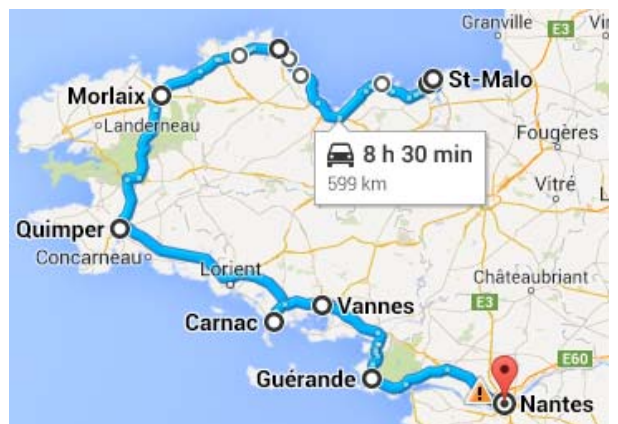
September

Musical September - Classical music performances of all kinds are arranged throughout Orne during the month of September



Celtic History by the Sea Tour

Start in the walled city of Saint-Malo, a fantastic city which was previously an island but is currently accessible by land. Cross the river from here to visit Dinard, a beautiful, high end resort town which previously held the magnificent homes of St-Malo's well-to-do merchants. From Dinard, follow the coastline along on the D786 to Paimpol, an area known for its port, beaches, markets and cobbled streets. From here, follow the D786 to Morlaix, where you will find houses constructed from stone and timber, bearing religious and secular sculptures on their facades. Take the E50 to the E60/N165 across the peninsula to Quimper. Quimper is the oldest Breton city and is a relaxed place and famous for its hand painted pottery. Take the E60 down the coast to see the famous megalithic sites of Carnac, including the standing stones, before travelling to the ancient town of Vannes. Travel just a bit further south east to the medieval town of Guérande before heading to the final destination of Nantes, a lively, modern French city offering its visitors many attractions and amusements.



Cathedrals to Conquerors

Start this tour in Rouen, the capital of Haute region where you can see the Rouen Cathedral, Big Clock and the former home of Gustave Flaubert, author of Madame Bovary. Follow the N15 to the coastal town of Le Havre, itself a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to heavy bombings during the battle of

Normandy. Just across the river is the beautiful port of Honfleur. Continue along the English channel on the D513 to Caen, the capital of Basse-Normandie and is famous for its historical buildings, constructed under the reign of William the Conqueror. Take the N13/E46 to Bayeux and see the famous Bayeux Tapestry, then follow the N13 along the coastline to Cherbourg. While in Cherbourg, visit the Chateau des Ravalet, the Cidrerie-Distillerie Theo Capelle and the city's port, which was among the last stops of the Titanic before it sank. From here, take the N2013/E46 to the D2/D900 into the city of Coutances. From here, follow the D7 to the E3 and the D43 to Mont Saint-Michel. This incredible, UNESCO listed island village is among the most visited attractions in France and an ideal finishing point for this spectacular journey.



Money Matters

Currency

Euro (EUR €) = 100 cents (¢) Notes are in denominations of €500, €200, €100, €50, €20, €10, €5. Coins are in denominations of €1 and €2, 50, 20, 10, 5 and 1 cent coins.

Currency Exchange

The best places to change cash in France is either at post offices, which offer the best exchange rates. You can also exchange cash at the major banks and bureaux de change. France is known for having a very high exchange rate, so it is often favourable to use a credit card if you have one without international fees.

Banks are open in France from Monday to Saturday from 9.00am - 5.00pm, though they may close during lunchtime hours in smaller towns and rural areas.

ATMs

ATMs are readily available throughout France. ATMs typically accept cards from the Cirrus, Maestro, Visa and MasterCard networks. Please note that without a local bank card, there is typically a fee of €3 per transaction.

Credit & Debit Cards

Visa/Carte Bleu and MasterCard/Eurocard are the most widely accepted in France, though many hotels, retailers, restaurants and tourist attractions will also typically accept American Express and Diners Club cards.

Tax

Value Added Tax (VAT), known as *taxe sur la valeur ajoutée (TVA)* is 19.6% in France and is applicable to most goods and services. The tax on medicine and books is 5.5%. If you purchase goods worth at least €175 in one store in the same day (though no more than 10 of the same item), you may get a refund if you carry these goods out of France in your suitcase within three months of purchase.

Tipping

Restaurants in France automatically include a 12-15% service charge, which is required by law as tips are assessed for taxation. Each bill will itemise “service compris” (tip included). The prices on the menu include tax and tip. If you wish to show your appreciation to your particular waiter feel free to leave extra change or a small tip. Taxi drivers will expect a small tip between 5-10%, though it is customary to simply round up the fare to the nearest €1, regardless of fare. Porters are typically given €1 per bag and housekeepers receive €1-1.50 per person, per day. If a concierge provides special assistance, it is customary to provide €10-50, depending on the service provided. If you take any guided tours, provide the guide €1-2 at a museum or €2-5 if you take a guided group tour.

Stay Healthy & Stay Safe



Stay Healthy

The French health care system is one of the best in the world and the level of care in hospitals very high. If you receive any care in France, you will need to pay upfront and contact your private insurance for reimbursement. Make sure to carry travel health insurance and clarify the details of your coverage before you depart. Physicians and pharmacies are often on call, but home visits and consultations on Sundays and public holidays are always more expensive. If you need to see a doctor or go to a hospital, you will be given a signed “feuille de soins” (a statement of the treatment carried out) and possibly an “ordonnance” (a prescription) which you must keep in order to make a claim. Check with your travel insurance provider for the name of any preferred, English speaking doctors that may be recommended.

Stay Safe

France is statistically one of the safest countries in Europe. Pick-pocketing is the most prevalent crime affecting tourists, so it is important to stay vigilant, especially in crowded places such as trains, metro stations and popular tourist areas. Never leave your bags unattended and try to avoid wearing highly visible, expensive jewellery or clothing that may identify you as a member of a religious or political movement. As always, it is imperative to follow the same safety precautions when travelling that you employ at home.

In case of an emergency, dial the European emergency number: 112. You may also dial 15 for a medical emergency or 17 for police.

Where To Get Help

New Zealand Embassy
103, rue de Grenelle
75007 Paris

Tel: 01 4501 4343

Fax: 01 4501 4344

<http://www.nzembassy.com/france>

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We look forward to hearing from you!

Auto Europe New Zealand hope that you find the information in this guide helpful for your self drive holiday in France.

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Updated: August 2014