TEN THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT YOUR TIME ABROAD

1. Don’t expect to find things as you have at home, for you have left home to find things different.

2. An open mind and a light heart are the beginnings of a wonderful journey.

3. Pack sensibly; bring only the essentials.

4. Unnecessary worry brings little pleasure.

5. Know where your passport is at ALL TIMES, for a person without a passport is like a person without a country.

6. Remember not to judge the entire host country in the event of a single unpleasant incident.

7. Do not let fellow sojourners get on your nerves, for you have prepared yourself thoroughly for an enjoyable experience.

8. While abroad, be prepared to “do as they do.”

9. You can learn more than you expected by simply observing.

10. Remember you are a guest in other lands. Those who treat their hosts with respect shall be honored.

Preparation & Planning

Documents

Passport
A passport is required to enter France. As passports can take four to eight weeks to process, you are urged to apply immediately if you have not done so already. You may get more information at your local post office. A fee of $60.00 is required and your US passport is valid for ten years.
Once you receive your passport, make photocopies of it. Leave one copy at home and bring one copy with you. Be sure to keep your passport in a safe place! If your passport is lost or stolen, you should immediately contact the AMERICAN Consulate or Embassy.

The address of the American Embassy in Paris is:
2 Avenue Gabriel-Péri, 75008 Paris. The telephone number is 365.74.60.

If for any reason you should have legal difficulties in France, the American Consulate or Embassy cannot intervene on your behalf. They will assist you in contacting a lawyer if necessary.

**Visa**

You are also required to apply for a visa. A call before visiting the French Embassy in Washington D.C. should help you get a list of all the documents and material you need to bring with you (I.D. photos, birth certificate, a letter of recommendation from your sponsor explaining the reason of your stay in France etc…) to secure your visa from French authorities.

The address of the French Embassy in Washington D.C. is:
4101 Reservoir Road, NW Washington D.C. 20007. The telephone of the Attaché is (202) 944-6438.


You may be required to secure *une carte de séjour* upon arrival in France. In order to obtain it, you will be required to have a medical examination (required to be completed by a French doctor) which has a fee of about €54 euros or $60.00, a copy of your birth certificate, provide six passport photos and pay a €30 fee. Although the French system is not always consistent in requiring this, please be prepared by having these items with you when you arrive in France.

Follow the French Embassy’s guidelines on applying for the appropriate work visa.

**Power of Attorney**

You are encouraged to designate someone as your Power of Attorney while you are abroad. Your power of Attorney can act as your legal representative in a number of situations.

**HEALTH ISSUES**

No special vaccinations are necessary to enter France or re-enter the United States after traveling in France.

In order to avoid medical and dental expenses on site, you are encouraged to see your physician and dentist prior to your departure. We also advise you to budget some money for medical situations on site.
SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

It is important to consider safety issues while overseas. You are encouraged to review the US State Department’s website at http://www.travel.state.gov for up-to-date information on travel in France.

Female students should not travel alone at night, and you should always keep your personal belongings hidden. French cities are now a mosaic of cultures with people from many economic levels and cultural backgrounds, and you should not assume that you are safe to travel without concern. Particularly, students from smaller towns or who have lived in relatively safe neighborhoods in the U.S.A. must adopt a more cautious attitude. Consult the US State Department Travel advisories for up-to-date information on travel precautions for the country where

Remember to use common sense when giving out your address or phone number. If you are uncomfortable with someone, you may have a real reason to be. Although you want to meet and get to know people, you should remember that some people may not share in that innocent intention. It is wise to set up times and places to meet others rather than give out any personal information.

MONEY MATTERS

Personal spending habits vary too greatly to state exactly how much it will cost to live in France during the program. The amount of money that is generally spent during one semester varies anywhere from $2,000.00 to $4,000.00. This amount really depends on three main factors: your personal spending habits, the amount of traveling you plan to do, and the value of the dollar. Keep in mind that it is always best to have a variety of methods in carrying and obtaining cash overseas.

The euro

As part of the European Union, France’s currency is the euro. Other Member States that share the euro are Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain. The official abbreviation for the euro is EUR, and its symbol is €. The current exchange is approximately €1 to $.75 as of summer 2004.

Debit Card

One of the easiest and least expensive means of obtaining money is at an ATM machine. If you have a debit card this money can come directly out of your bank account and you won’t have to pay interest as you would with a credit card. This is convenient because you don’t have to worry about bank hours and you won’t have to pay commission for converting your money. The drawback is that if you have a problem with your magnetic
strip, as frequently happens, or your card is lost, you will have to wait for another card to be sent to you. Again, having several different methods for obtaining cash such as credit cards or traveler’s checks, will help avoid this problem. Make sure your PIN number is a numerical code with four digits. Keypads in Europe do not have letters or have them in different order than keypads in the US and won’t accept more than four digits.

**Credit Cards**

Money can be transferred to you easily from the US with a Visa International credit card (ask your bank if you will be able to use your card in France and the rest of Europe). This card (or a similar one) is a good resource for emergency situations. When using a credit card, remember that interest is charged and the purchase price is converted from euros to dollars based on the exchange rate the day the purchase is posted on your account in the US, not the day you make the purchase. Be certain to make arrangements for someone to pay your bill in the US while you are in France.

**Traveler’s checks**

If you are going to carry more than $100.00 it should be carried in the form of traveler’s checks that can be converted into cash at a bank. Keep in mind how much commission the banks charge as it can vary from place to place.

**Bank Account**

You must open a bank account at a local bank in order to get a RIB. You will need to remember this code number (like you do your Social Security number in the US) to fill out any paper dealing with your pay check and the dossier you’ll have to establish and papers to fill out to secure a government grant to help defray your lodging expenses and any bank transaction in France.

**Safeguarding Your Money & Documents**

Be careful with your money. Pickpockets do exist and generally hit when you are in a crowd. Another common place to lose money to thieves is **on trains** when traveling at night or **in the subway** in Paris or large cities.

**Travel**

Students who are planning on traveling EXTENSIVELY in France before, during, or after the program should investigate the availability of student discounts before purchasing tickets. See the Eurail brochure I gave you.

Any time you travel for more than a day’s outing, you should notify your friends and/or contact/host family of your destination and return date. If you are traveling for several
days, it is essential that you inform your French contact of your destinations, planned return date, and addresses where you can be reached.

The French train system is one of the best in the world. Students can travel from Paris to any city on the express train, the TGV – Train à Très Grande Vitesse – Regular train service is available for most inter-city travel. You can get a railway discount card that can be purchased at the train station. This is worthwhile if you do any train traveling. For traveling by bus get Une carte orange and always ask for a student’s discount. For traveling in the subway buy un carnet rather than a unit ticket always more expensive. It pays to inquire and IN FRENCH even more!

There are many interesting possibilities for both group and individual excursions in the region where you’ll live. Go to the Syndicat d’initiative, Boulevard de Fleurus near the City Hall (l’hôtel de ville) in Limoges and you’ll receive free maps, documentation, brochures and all kinds of information on places, museums and monuments to visit, activities and tourist attractions.

ARRIVAL LOGISTICS

Information, booking, and payment are handled directly by your travel agent.

From Paris airport you need to take a shuttle or bus to get to the main train station. Paris has four but you need to go gare d’Autsterlitz to purchase a ticket to go to Limoges gare des Bénédictins. If you have not already done so contact Marie DUMONT mariedumont@worldonline.fr or call her at 0-11-33-555-31-03-83 to give her your date, time of arrival so she can be there for you and guide you.
Marie should help you take care of your dossier for lodging with Midi immobilier on The University of Limoges campus.

If there are problems while you are traveling which will delay your arrival, you should call her. It is imperative that you keep me and Marie informed.

Cash

It is recommended that you have $100 in euros on hand when you arrive in France. You can exchange money for a nominal fee at a local bank and at any major airport in the US and overseas.

Speak French !

Speak French as much as you can, with whomever you can, wherever you can! You will not regret it! Once you start the habit, it will be easier and easier to maintain, and you will be happier for it in the end.
Liability Insurance

Regardless of your housing arrangements, you should consider carrying liability insurance from the US in case you accidentally cause any damage to your accommodations or have an item lost or stolen.

Homestay

Accept differences in French family’s homestyle and accommodations with an open mind. Remember that **YOU need to adjust to French people, not the reverse.** This process requires patience and problem solving skills. You’ll discover you have lots of inner resources you can tap into and will grow and change in the process. Raise to the challenge! Considering all aspects of your stay to be a cultural and learning experience will go a long way in helping you to understand the differences that you are sure to encounter. **Expect that there will be a period of adjustment.** Please, refer to the literature I already gave you to read, e-mail me for comfort if need be and remember that Marie Dumont is always a phone call away.

Housing Contracts

Marie should have the key to your apartment in Limoges as soon as you set foot on the Limoges train station platform and she will help you upon your arrival. She will take you to your apartment and accompany you to your first trip to a grocery store type **Grande surface** always cheaper than **petits commerces.** In case of an emergency look for a convenient store or **supérette.** Should there be any problem, I am sure she would host you for a few days. Again, you should contact her prior to your departure and keep me informed via email.

Holidays

During the holidays (Easter and Christmas) and school breaks, you are not expected to stay put. By then you should have made friends who will invite you to travel. If not, make plans to go places after visiting the local **Syndicat d’initiative** or tourist bureau.

Telephone and e-mail

Remember to keep in touch with your family in the US, you can also arrange to have them call you regularly. Your cell phone will be of no use in France but you may purchase one and a plan while there. It is strongly recommended that you do so. You may also purchase phone cards to call the US.
Gifts

It is customary and polite to bring a gift to your host family or people who invite you to their home. Remember it is really a privilege as French people do not socialize the same way Americans do. They usually meet outside their homes (the concept of home does not even exist in France being replaced by that of the family). There is more of a distinction between the private sphere and the public one in France. If you are, therefore, invited to a home, it is a privilege and you should indicate your appreciation of this special favor:

The following are some gift ideas:

- maple syrup or candy
- typical non-perishable food items
- calendars with US scenery
- Cassettes or CDs of American music
- Kitchen towels, mittens, pot holders with English print (vegetable English names etc…)
- Hand-made crafts or jewelry (especially Native –American)
- A bottle of FRENCH wine
- Flowers

N.B. always send a thank you note to people who have done you a favor to show your appreciation. It shows good breeding i.e. that you are bien élevé. Read Polly Platt for more on the subject.

Communication

Mail

Airmail between the United States and France takes seven to ten days. Surface mail takes six to eight weeks. Surface mail is a good way to send items you may not need immediately, because it is inexpensive and allows you to travel with a lightest load initially.
When sending postcards, place them in an envelope, as they will be processed much quicker, and this will ensure their delivery to the US. The rate, however, is cheaper if you send the postcard alone.

Computers

Access to computers in France is much more limited than in the US. Besides, the computers are generally older than the models you may be used to. Overall, it is important that you be prepared for limited access to computers and email. Should you carry your lap top WITH YOU, you will need a gadget converter to plug it according to French standards. Remember the electric current is different there.
Email

There are a couple of other options for you to use email: one is to find a cyber café, where you can pay for your time on email and perhaps receive a membership for a reduced price, another is to go to La poste in the center of town, where you can also buy time to use a computer.

Telephone

France is 6 hours ahead of the United States (EST). International calls can be placed from phone booths using a French phone card, which can be purchased from the post office or Bureau de tabac stores (ask for the best rate to the US). You will need a completely different card to call from public phone booths. These are also available at the tabac. You may also use an AT&T or MCI calling card to call the US if you have one. Check with your phone company for dialing procedures. The advantage to a US calling card is that costs are billed according to US rates, which are much less expensive than French rates. Some US long distance companies also have special monthly international calling plans, which can save your friends and family members additional money if they plan to call you in France on a regular basis.

Cell phones

It is very common for students to have cell phones. Once you are on-site, you will learn more about your options. You can buy a phone (approximately $100 new, or you can buy a used one from a past participant) and purchase rechargeable cards to make calls ($20-$40), or you can subscribe to a monthly service for $30 and receive a free phone.

ACADEMICS

Overview of the French educational System

The French educational system is very different from any US institution. You may find it confusing as there are no comprehensive course bulletins, and the scheduling of classes often takes place just before classes begin.

A successful experience in France requires you to:

- Be patient and flexible while adjusting to the French educational system.
- Take the initiative in planning your academic program before you leave and while you are abroad.
- Practice self-discipline and adapt to cultural differences in academic and social circumstances.
Professors & Teaching styles

The professor/student relationship in France will be quite different from the kind of relationship you may be used to in the US. Professors are not necessarily expected to be attentive to students' needs and are rather viewed as academic experts who provide students with insights into the topic of the course. The standards which US students consider “good teaching” in the United States cannot be applied to the French way of teaching. It is important to remember that the unique benefit of studying abroad is the opportunity to learn about the French academic system: how it is structured, what are its strengths and weaknesses and to learn as much French as possible during your time in France. You bear the responsibility for what you learn.

Document your studies! It is your responsibility to collect any supporting information you may need: notes, journal, receipts for trips, visits to museums, movie theaters etc… You will probably want to purchase a French-English dictionary once in Limoges, if you do not already have one.

Remember with the exception of wine, everything costs more in France the more so since the euro is stronger than the dollar (1 euro = $0.70)

French people do not live on credit as Americans do. Energy costs much more; for example filling a gas tank costs $70.00. You’ll understand why French people rely on atomic energy (France does not produce a single drop of oil hence the saying “En France on n’a pas de pétrole mais on a des idées” meaning in France we do not have oil but we have ideas) and why French cars are small and gas efficient. As a rule do not leave lights on, do not let water run for half hour when you take a shower etc… CONSERVE ENERGY, all French people do.

LIFE IN FRANCE

Cultural information

France became a republic shortly after the United States, as a result of the Revolution of 1789, which overturned the Ancien Régime (Old Regime) based on an all-powerful king. But its republican history in the past two centuries has been anything but continuous. The present French Republic is the fifth at the end of long line of famous rulers: Napoleon, King Louis-Philippe, Louis Napoleon (a nephew of Napoleon I) and the WWII German occupation of France.

In 1959 General de Gaulle, the greatest French hero of the war, founded the Fifth Republic upon the basis of an entirely new constitution. Under the present constitution, the French president is selected by direct, universal suffrage to a seven-year term. This position shares the executive function with a prime minister who is appointed and heads the national Assembly. The President is responsible only to the electorate and can dissolve the Assembly, but the Assembly cannot dismiss the President.

Besides the Assembly (comprised of deputies elected for five year terms) the Parlement includes the more conservative and older Senate, comprised of Senators elected for nine-year terms. These representatives are elected for the 96 French departments (including
Corsica) and six overseas territories. In 1972 France was divided up for administrative purposes into 22 clusters of départements or regions, whose names are taken from the old pre-revolutionary provinces (La Normandie, la Picardie, Le Limousin, Le Périgord, La Bourgogne etc…) but which do not always correspond to the traditional domains associated with the old names.

Despite efforts of decentralization, Paris remains the overwhelming power of the country – the administrative, political, and cultural capital. No other city of the world (not even London) can rival it in the concentration of power it represents within one country; in many respects it is still the greatest world capital – the place where cultural and intellectual movements receive international sanction.

France belongs to the European Union (EU). It has staked its future on advanced technology and atomic energy, rather than on the agriculture that used to be its mainstay. Wine-making remains one of its most important industries, and both ideologically and culturally agriculture continues to play an important role in French life.

Packing List

Since you will be carrying your own luggage during the trip, often for long stretches in airports, bus, and train stations, it is important that you pack sensibly. Take only as much as you can carry easily by yourself. One way to measure what is “easily carried” is to pack everything you would like to take, pick it all up, and walk around the block. If you are not comfortable doing so, you may want to re-evaluate what you’ve packed.

Important: Take clothing that needs a minimal amount of care (this is especially important if you plan to do any independent traveling). You may have to go a couple of weeks without doing any laundry, especially at the beginning of the program. Many travelers to Europe find that the most practical solution is to wash all underwear by hand and to take only such outer clothing as can be worn many times without showing soil. Blue jeans are as common in France as here. Students dress very comfortably, but with style in France. Nice jeans, skirts (for women), nice but comfortable walking shoes, dark colors, and sweaters are all very popular items. Sweaters will be especially needed since winter temperatures drop to around freezing and it does snow in winter. It does rain quite a bit in the Limousin Region so make sure you have a good wind breaker with a hood and a raincoat. On the other hand you may also experience heat weave or Indian summer so take a few light items. Spring weather usually begins sometimes at the end of March.

Suggested Clothing to Pack

(These are only suggestions you should adjust accordingly to your own personal tastes and style! This list is typical for a three month stay).

- Underwear
- Socks
• 1-2 pairs nylons
• 3 blouses/skirts
• 2 sweaters
• 2 pair jeans or slacks
• 1 skirt/sport coat
• 1 nice outfit (for evening wear)
• 1 pair pajamas
• Comfortable walking shoes
• 1 pair dress shoes
• 1 pair beach shoes or sandals
• 1 swim suit plus beach towel
• Raincoat
• Jacket for cool weather
• Winter coat
• Scarves
• 1 pair of shorts (except in the South of France people do not go down the street in shorts)
• sunglasses

Other necessary items may include:

• toothpaste
• toothbrush
• dental floss
• Shaving kit (optional)
• Deodorant
• Comb/ hair brush
• Washcloth and towel
• A temporary supply of soap, shampoo (in unbreakable containers) wrap toiletries in plastic BAGS.
• Aspirin
• Supply of prescriptions medicine
• Extra pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses
• Sewing kit
• Safety pins
• Umbrella
• Small flashlight
• French phrase book
• French-English dictionary
• Verb conjugation book
• Grammar review book for easy reference
• Pocket calculator
• Extra blankets
• Camera and film
• Travel alarm clock

Most of the above personal items can be found in France; however, you may want to bring enough of your favorite brands to last you during your stay.

Don’t forget to also bring along the following:

• Photocopy of your passport and visa.
• Copy of your insurance policy number and medical information concerning allergies, medications, blood type, immunization history, eyeglasses, or other prescriptions.
• Important phone numbers and email addresses of contact people in France.
• A copy of your birth certificate
• An international driver’s license (AAA will deliver one for $18.00 and 3 iD pictures) if you plan to drive in France, rent a car etc…

Pre-Departure Checklist

Following is a list of the many things you need to do before leaving the United States. This is not a complete list, so please, adapt it to suit your individual needs.

  o PASSPORT: By now you should have applied for a passport. Leave a photocopy of your passport and visa with someone at home in case it needs to be re-issued if lost.

  o VISA; Apply for a visa. If you have not secured one yet fly to the French Embassy in Washington D.C. with the letter I just typed for you.

  o AIRFARE: look into airfare arrangements. You may want to contact Council travel in Philadelphia. Once you have booked a flight keep Dr. Dewey and her sister informed.

  o MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS: Make medical arrangements. See a doctor or dentist prior to departure.

  o PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION: Be sure to review the information provided by your M.D.

  o INSURANCE: Review your insurance policy and purchase additional health and/or liability insurance, if desired.

  o EMERGENCY FUND: plan for an emergency fund. Make plans with your contact person in the US in case you need emergency funds.

  o MONEY MATTERS: Refer to money matters section in this handbook
TIPS FROM PAST STUDENTS

- I had to learn to wait. Everything-the supermarket lines, pedestrians, post office lines, etc. – takes longer in France.
- It was slower, louder, dirtier. I ate later, drank more, and loved every minute of it!
- Everything closes from noon to 2:00 P.M. and for the day at 7:00 P.M. However, this is subject to change at any time. No offices are dependable and they might close down for the rest of the day, especially banks.
- Kisses. Kisses for gifts, saying hello and goodbye.
- Bathing less often.
- Wearing the same clothes over and over again.
- Eating later and longer. The meals are big, important, and fancy.
- The meals are more organized, and lots of manners are used at the table.
- Ate lots and lots of baguettes.
- Constant arguing.
- The French love to tell exaggerated stories.
- Relationships (friendly or romantic) work differently.

How would you suggest meeting people?

Approach other students in your apartment complex.
Sports center
Neighbors
Go out a lot (IN GROUPS)
Don’t make friends just because they are French-make sure you get along first.
Libraries
Parties.

Additional comments:

Use credit cards, travelers cheques and a cash card. Keep track of your spending.
Pack things you can wear in all situations. Don’t pack too much—just essentials.
One has to accept seeing McDonald’s and hearing English on the radio and TV.
Customer service is non-existent in France.
The French academic system is extremely frustrating
Higher level of noise pollution.
A person dictates her/his own lifestyle and therefore expenses, but it cannot be overlooked that everything but wine is much more expensive in France.
Please, consult with Dr. Dewey to secure emails from past participants and/or K.U. students who are presently overseas and can address your questions and concerns first hand.

BON VOYAGE ET BONNE CHANCE!