



PUBLIC DOCUMENT

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of Traveler Information

France - Consular Information Sheet

January 27, 2002

The following advisory for American travelers heading for France was compiled from information provided by the U.S. State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Food and Drug Administration, the Center for Disease Control and some very expensive spy satellites that the French don't know about. It is intended as a guide for American travelers only and no guarantee of accuracy is ensured or intended.

Geography

France is a medium-sized foreign country situated on the continent of Europe, and is, for all intents and purposes, useless. It is an important member of the world community, although not nearly as important as it thinks. It is bounded by Germany, Spain, Switzerland and some smaller nations of no particular consequence or shopping opportunities. France is a very old country with many treasures such as the Louvre and EuroDisney. Among its contributions to Western civilization are champagne, Camembert cheese, the guillotine, and body odor. Although France likes to think of itself as a modern nation, air conditioning is little used and it is next to impossible to get decent Mexican food. One continuing exasperation for American visitors is that the people willfully persist in speaking French, although many will speak English if shouted at repeatedly.

People

France has a population of some 62 million people, most of whom drink and smoke a great deal, drive like lunatics, are dangerously oversexed and have no concept of standing patiently in a line. The French people are generally gloomy, temperamental, proud, arrogant, aloof and undisciplined; those are their good points. Most French citizens are Roman Catholic, although you'd hardly guess it from their behavior. Many people are Communists and topless sunbathing is common. Men sometimes have girls' names like Marie and they kiss each other when they hand out medals. American travelers are advised to travel in groups and to wear baseball caps and colorful pants for easier mutual recognition.

Safety

In general, France is a safe destination, although travelers are advised that France is occasionally invaded by Germany. By tradition, the French surrender more or less at once and, apart from a temporary shortage of Scotch whisky and increased difficulty in getting baseball scores and stock market prices, life for the visitors generally goes on much as before. A tunnel connecting France to Britain beneath the English Channel has been opened in recent years to make it easier for the French government to flee to London.

History

France was discovered by Charlemagne in the Dark Ages. Other important historical figures are Louis XIV, the Huguenots, Joan of Arc, Jacques Cousteau and Charles de Gaulle, who was President for many years and is now an airport.

Government

The French form of government is democratic but noisy. Elections are held more or less continuously and always result in a run-off. For administrative purposes, the country is divided into regions, departments, districts, municipalities, cantons, communes, villages, cafes, booths and floor tiles. Parliament consists of two chambers, the Upper and Lower (although, confusingly, they are both on the ground floor), whose members are either Gaullists or communists, neither of whom can be trusted. Parliament's principal preoccupations are setting off atomic bombs in the South Pacific and acting indignant when anyone complains. According to the most current State Department intelligence, the current President is someone named Jacques. Further information is not available at this time.

Culture

The French pride themselves on their culture, although it is not easy to see why. All of their songs sound the same and they have hardly ever made a movie that you want to watch for anything except the nude scenes. Nothing, of course, is more boring than a French novel (except perhaps an evening with a French family.)

Cuisine

Let's face it, no matter how much garlic you put on it, a snail is just a slug with a shell on its back. Croissants, on the other hand, are excellent although it is impossible for most Americans to pronounce this word. American travelers are therefore advised to stick to cheeseburgers at McDonald's or the restaurants at the leading hotels such as Sheraton or Holiday Inn. Bring your own beer, as the domestic varieties are nothing but a poor excuse for such.

Economy

France has a large and diversified economy, second only to Germany's economy in Europe, which is surprising since people hardly ever work at all. If they are not spending four hours dawdling over lunch, they are on strike and blocking the roads with their trucks and tractors. France's principal exports, in order of importance to the economy, are wine, passenger jets, satellite launchers, perfume, guided missiles, champagne, high-caliber weaponry, grenade launchers, tanks, attack aircraft, miscellaneous armaments and cheese.

Conclusion

France enjoys a rich history, a picturesque and varied landscape and a temperate climate. In short, it would be a very nice country if French people didn't inhabit it. The best thing that can be said for it is that it is not Spain. Remember no one ordered you to go abroad. Personally, we always take our vacation in Myrtle Beach and you are advised to do the same. Thank you and good luck.

--IF YOU HAVE READ IT IN ITS ENTIRETY, IT SHOULD BE CLEAR TO YOU THAT THE ABOVE TEXT IS A SATIRE--

(AUTHOR UNKNOWN)