

Dr. Culture's[®] Road Warrior Survival Guide: Departing England for Paris

Taking the Chunnel From England to Paris

Travel time is comfortable; two and half hours and hardly worth the significant extra cost between Coach and First Class. Most businessmen travel in Coach Class due to high cost of 1st class ticket and the brief ride.

PARIS STATS:

Population: 2.15 million in the city; 10.5 million in the Île de France (the suburban area around Paris)

France Age Spread:

0-14 years:	18.6%
15-64 years:	65.1%
65 years and over:	16.3%

France Median Age: 38.3 years

TRAVEL SECURITY:

Security considerations need to be reviewed again as your location and threats have changed dramatically from England. France has long been considered a safe house for several different terrorist organizations. As a result, the travel SMART business traveler must adjust their activities and behavior depending on different and changing conditions. As reflected in this report problems abound in Paris – much of it generated by France's lax immigration policies and blame-society-for-the-criminal's- actions attitude of their courts. Dramatic, decisive response can happen however; in 1994 French Special Forces boarded a hijacked aircraft that landed in Marseilles and killed the hijackers – an unusual step considering the French prefer to negotiate with or give in to terrorist demands but intelligence revealed that, after refueling, the hijackers planned to fly the plane into the Eifel Tower – as a result, there was no negotiating undertaken.

However, particularly unnerving, especially for the unaccompanied female business traveler or tourist, sexual assaults against women have risen across France, with court convictions for rape having soared by 61% between 1995 to 2000 (Time Magazine Nov 2002).

A few terrorism and criminal activity items are included here for your consideration:

During 2000, France maintained its public face of traditional tough stance against terrorism. On the legal front, Paris was the first to sign the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Financing, which was a French initiative. The French Government's nationwide "Vigi-Pirate" plan--which uses military forces to reinforce police security in Paris and other major cities to prevent a repeat of the Paris metro attacks by Algerian terrorists—remains in effect.

Gangs of thieves operate on the rail link from Charles de Gaulle Airport to downtown Paris by preying on jet-lagged, luggage-burdened tourists. Often, one thief distracts the tourist with a question about directions while an accomplice takes a momentarily unguarded backpack, briefcase, or purse. Thieves also time their thefts to coincide with train stops so that they may quickly exit the car.

The Number One Subway Line, which runs by many major tourist attractions (The Grand Arch at La Defense, Arc de Triomphe, Champs Elysees, Concorde, Louvre, Bastille), is the site of many thefts.

Many thefts occur at the major department stores (Galleries Lafeyette, Printemps, Samaritaine) where tourists often leave wallets, passports, and credit cards on cashier counters during transactions.

In some hotels, thieves frequent lobbies and even hotel restaurants – particularly at breakfast time. While guests are having their breakfast (especially at a buffet type breakfast) thieves take advantage of a minute of inattention to snatch jackets, purses and backpacks.

ATMs are very common in France, allowing travelers to carry as much money as they need for each day. The rates are competitive with local exchange bureaus and an ATM transaction is easier than the cashing of travelers' checks. However, crimes committed around ATMs have increased. The usual American ATM common sense rules apply here as well.

Relevant Published Extracts:

Theodore Dalrymple, Journal Magazine, Dec 2002

The *laxisme* of the French criminal justice system is now notorious. Judges often make remarks indicating their sympathy for the criminals they are trying (based upon the usual generalizations about how society, not the criminal, is to blame); and the day before I witnessed the scene on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, 8,000 police had marched to protest the release from prison on bail of an infamous career armed robber and suspected murderer before his trial for yet another armed robbery, in the course of which he shot someone in the head. Out on bail before this trial, he then burgled a house. Surprised by the police, he and his accomplices shot two of them dead and seriously wounded a third. He was also under strong suspicion of having committed a quadruple murder a few days previously, in which a couple who owned a restaurant, and two of their employees, were shot dead in front of the owners' nine-year-old daughter. The left-leaning *Libération*, one of the two daily newspapers the French intelligentsia reads, dismissed the marchers, referring with disdainful sarcasm to *la fièvre flicardiaire*—cop fever. The paper would no doubt have regarded the murder of a single journalist—that is to say, of a *full* human being—differently, let alone the murder of two journalists or six; and of course no one in the newspaper acknowledged that an effective police force is as vital a guarantee of personal freedom as a free press, and that the thin blue line that separates man from brutality is exactly that: thin. This is not a decent thing for an intellectual to say, however true it might be.

It is the private complaint of everyone, however, that the police have become impotent to suppress and detect crime. Horror stories abound.

The official figures for this upsurge, doctored as they no doubt are, are sufficiently alarming. Reported crime in France has risen from 600,000 annually in 1959 to 4 million today, while the population has grown by less than 20 percent (and many think today's crime number is an underestimate by at least a half). In 2000, one crime was reported for every sixth inhabitant of Paris, and the rate has increased by at least 10 percent a year for the last five years. Reported cases of arson in France have increased 2,500 percent in seven years, from 1,168 in 1993 to 29,192 in 2000; robbery with violence rose by 15.8 percent between 1999 and 2000, and 44.5 percent since 1996 (itself no golden age).

Relevant articles:

http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/02_11/b3774059.htm

GROUND TRANSPORTATION IN PARIS

Train? Bus? Forget it. Taxi is best bet here.

Taxi: Although you should already have an idea of the cost of taxi -- in Euro Dollars -- ask first -- and no, don't try and pay with US dollars.

The good news? Paris is laid out nicely, almost logically. The trip to the hotel is direct.

The bad news? There is none -- you're in Paris. Be aware of your surroundings, stay out of slums, and enjoy yourself

CROSS CULTURAL COMPETENCY TIPS

Paris, France

Dr. Culture® Travel Tip: You need to be the *Stealth American* in Paris. Americans often tell me the French treated them badly; were rude, looked down on them, didn't even acknowledge their attempt to speak the language, etc. I have found many Americans unknowingly sabotage any opportunity for cordial treatment by traveling in Paris, for instance, dressed as if they are going to mow the lawn or paint the house! Understand that the French, as the Spanish, and many other cultures, are very aware of fashion and culturally, view how you dress to be a statement of what type/what class of person you are. It is an important cross cultural component that is overlooked or arrogantly ignored by many Americans with comments such as "Well, I'm, on vacation so I'm not going to shave" and "I'm dressing in cut off jeans, a tank top that says 'I'm with stupid' and flip-flop shoes because they are comfortable." It's not comfortable; it sloppy, slovenly and shows you to be of low class and not worthy of being treated any differently than any other low class type. And, bluejeans? Don't travel in them, don't pack them. Bluejeans are worn only by low class adults or teenagers (yes, there are strict class distinctions in France – *duh!*). Certainly, this is not appropriate for an American businessperson -- even during "free time." Men: dress up in nice slacks and pullovers or sports coat outfit. Women travelers are best advised to wear pants suit, etc., something comfortable but stylish. Classics are best here. No sweatshirts, no jeans, no shorts, no tennis shoes. Then, enjoy local food and tourist sites, don't remind anyone in France that the US pulled their ashes from the fires of WWII (incredible, Americans still do this), and enjoy this magnificent country and culture.

Eye contact here is frequent and intense -- many Americans find this uncomfortable and often intimidating. In negotiations, the French know this unnerves many Americans so be prepared for it. American women often report to us this level eye contact especially unpleasant.

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Expect the French to be generally formal and reserved. Business hierarchies are strict but are also strongly individualistic and have a centralized authority structure -- which makes for faster decisions.

Most Americans perceive the French to be preoccupied with status, rank, and formality. Contacts here, as in many other regions, are very important and allow one to sidestep bureaucracy, regulations, etc. It also allows great facilitation in establishing or enhancing relationships with your French counterparts.

Here you'll find a highly developed stratification/class system although most French are of middle class. But, you'll find there is animosity between social groups. Moreover, superiors demand obedience from subordinates in all walks of life -- it is all about power. It is not as pronounced here as you'll find in Moscow or St. Petersburg but understand power is viewed as a simple fact of society; and, sex roles in French society are fluid and one's status more important than one's sex.

Always have your business cards printed in French as well as English. Coordinate with the hotel concierge before your arrival or immediately upon checking in at the hotel.

Remember the French get 4-5 weeks of summer vacation and almost all of them take it in July and/or August. As you find in the US prior to the Thanksgiving-Christmas-New Years block, 1-2 weeks prior to the July vacation season, phone calls are not returned, coordination becomes sloppy, etc. Keep the French vacation period in mind when planning your business visit -- and no, don't even think about asking to meet with them during their vacation. *Forgetaboutit...not even email!*

The French have great appreciation for good conversationalists -- especially if they can speak on other things besides the business at hand. Recommended subjects are food, history, etc. And always complement the food and wine -- especially before discussing business. And, don't drink hard liquor or smoke between courses. The French believe this deadens the taste buds.

Light handshake is best. Shaking hands is expected when meeting someone as well as when leaving. Women offer their hands first -- and oh my gawd, don't kiss anyone's hand....(from another US/French cross cultural business *horror* story)

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Learn if there are any titles associated with your colleagues then use them. Sometimes the French introduce themselves by saying their last name first, i.e., Pierre Robert introduces himself as “Robert, Pierre.” Asking about this shows you have done your US-French Cross Cultural Business competency homework.

Slapping an open palm over a closed fist is considered rude, obscene action interpreted as a pseudo-masturbation display and obscene. Oh my gawd, does anyone remember the Three Stooges and how often they did this?!

Don't chew gum -- ever.

The US “OK sign” (forming a circle with thumb and forefinger) is rude and generally indicates you think the person to which you are gesturing is a “zero.”

Gifts? Books are great; the thicker and more complex the better. Remember simplicity is not a virtue here.

Always dress well -- always.

BUSINESS HOTELS COMPARISON – PARIS

Two Hotels for comparison featured: One Moderate Range: *The Ambassador Hotel* and One Upper Range: *The Hotel California*.

Ambassador Hotel: Located on the right Bank of Paris and deep in the heart of the city's 9th Arrondissement, you will immediately be surprised at the amount of hotel you get for the money. The Ambassador Hotel is old world elegant and even opulent. From \$216 to 295 Euro Dollars (ED), this is an incredibly reasonable, well-located hotel. Complimentary buffet breakfast is included and you'll find everything you'd expect from a 4-Star Parisian hotel is available; concierge, laundry, dry-cleaning, etc. Even wheelchair accessible rooms are available -- rare for much of Europe. There is a very nice restaurant and bar in the hotel as well but, *puleeasse*, you weren't going to eat in the hotel were you? Not in Paris!

Hotel California: Located only 100 yards from the Champs Elysees and reasonably priced -- especially for central Paris -- from \$280 to \$560 ED although Suites are also available in excess of \$1100 ED. The lower priced rooms are perfectly fine; approximately 25 – 35 sq meters with large marble bathroom with bath, Double, King, or single beds) 380. If your reimbursement levels allow 560 ED allowance, go for the Junior Suite --

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60 sq ft with living room and amenity package that is excellent. Regardless of room size, ask for the Breakfast Buffet option -- an American style breakfast buffet (although crepes are available, *bien sûr*) for only \$22 ED daily. All rooms are equipped with air-conditioning, mini-bar, satellite TV, personal valuables safe and direct telephone line. The concierge service is exceptional. A small but perfectly civilized business center has all usual technology and many of the high-end rooms offer similar technology and it all works!

DINING OUT DISCUSSION – PARIS

In the words of Dr. Spock, “Captain, the readings are off the scale.” The opportunity for great food here cannot be measured. One thing is certain however; you can pay whatever you wish and whatever you want you can find it here. The food is excellent in the places that we feature and the prices range from incredibly reasonable (*Chartier*) to moderate-high *La Fermette Marbeuf 1900*. Also, a quick snapshot of a unique, intimate and positively wonderful little Left Bank place, *Auberges des Deux Signes*.

Chartier: Low prices and an honest to goodness look at Paris a century ago. Touted as one of the best value places to eat in Paris the food is wonderfully hearty -- *and fun!* Ambience is delightfully noisy and alive with activity. Sitting at a large table with 6-8 of your closest friends you never met before ensures a memorable dining experience. Remember, it's not a meal, it's an adventure. Dress is French casual.

Auberges des Deux Signes: Moderate Priced: This is a place where you sit back with the remainder of your Bordeaux and immerse yourself the “life is good” glow following a great meal in mesmeric surroundings. Enchanting dining opposite Notre Dame (across the river) in this converted 13th century chapel is memory making experience -- and just the thing you need halfway through your business trip. Traditional French fare is found here but for lunch or dinner, this is hard to beat. The fish terrine, lamb or duckling in cider vinegar is a knock out and well worth every ED....or, if you choose, the fixed menu of the day is unbelievably affordable -- approximately \$15 US for lunch, \$27 for dinner. When I and Madam Culture dined there, the waitress was mortified to tell us – in her limited English accented by her delightful French accent, that our specialized cake desert, prepared fresh for us, was “*Pooooof!--, eh,...Carbone.*” Then the owner, embarrassed said the same, then came our table with his wife, then the kitchen help—all of them apologizing for the

smoking burnt death of their signature dish. No problem, we went for another desert, more wine,..and, I don't recall much after that...

La Fermette Marbeuf 1900: Moderate to Upper Priced: The décor here is as fascinating as the food is excellent. If you're read or heard about Art Nouveau, here it is; complete with elaborate stained glass, etched glass, ceramics, murals, etc. Dress is casually elegant. This is a great place to meet your French counterpart for dinner -- impressive in its location, décor, and most importantly, its food. Also impressive to your French *confrere*: the fact that you knew about this place! Not many American business types are seen here. Give yourself extra points for this find.

Dr. Culture Travel Tip: The French, particularly the Parisians, are dog lovers. Therefore (1) watch your step on the sidewalks and (2) don't act like a shocked tourist when you see dogs in the restaurant -- not only sitting by their masters but also dining on fine French cuisine as well! My observation: their dogs are better behaved in restaurants than our American children. *And, puleeease:* don't take pictures of the dogs in the restaurant.