

The Essence of France: Geographical features, Regional specialties, Capital city and Festivals

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Abstract

This article provides an outline of France, highlighting its geographical features that include major mountains such as the Alps and the Pyrenees as well as rivers like the Seine, Loire, Rhône, Garonne and Rhine. Their starting and ending points and their role in tourism, agriculture and transportation leading to the development of the country. The different climate areas and seasons influence the country's lifestyle. The article also focuses on the country's regions, their location on the map and unique regional food like Bouillabaisse in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur. The capital city "Paris" which is also called the "City of Lights", is globally famous for its monuments and museums, those that are most visited and others that are less known to tourists. Paris plays a pivotal role in the field of Cinema as it is the city where the first film was made in the late 19th century. The city's renowned food and desserts are also highlighted.

Moreover, there are twenty arrondissements in Paris, some are well-known worldwide and others are less focused by visitors. Ultimately, the article presents the main festivals that are celebrated to promote unity and cultural identity within France and other countries.

Keywords: France, Geography, Food, Paris, Festivals.

Introduction

France is the largest country in the western Europe. It is famous for its abundant geography, different climates and seasons, rich culture and history. The country has a geometrical shape and shares borders with other neighbouring countries. The capital city is "Paris" which plays an important role in its monuments and museums, gastronomy, shopping and cinema.

Objective

To familiarise readers with France's geographical and cultural richness.

Geography of France

The map of France resembles a hexagon, sharing borders with neighbouring countries: Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Italy, Monaco, Andorra and Spain. These countries are also benefits for French people in terms of work, education and tourism.

Mountains and Rivers

France has a great variety of landscapes.

- The Alps Mountain is located in the southeastern France, separating the country from Italy and Switzerland.

- The Pyrenees Mountain is located in the southern part of France, separating the country from Spain.
- Seine is located near Eiffel Tower. It flows from northern France to the English Channel. It is more navigable and is famous for boat cruises. The river inspires many artists and writers.
- Loire is the longest River in France. It flows from Massif Central to the Atlantic Ocean. It is less navigable as in summer, the water level is low and in winter, the water level rises, becoming dangerous.
- Garonne flows from the Pyrenees mountains (southwestern France) to the Atlantic Ocean. The river is navigable near Bordeaux.
- Rhône flows from Switzerland (southeastern France) to the Mediterranean Sea. It is more navigable and it is an important energy source with dams, nuclear power plants and hydroelectric power stations.
- Rhine (Rhin) flows from the Swiss Alps to the North Sea. It is more navigable and has international shipping route that connects France, Switzerland and Germany. The river is important for transporting goods internationally.

Climate in France

There are 4 types of climates in the country

1. Oceanic climate (climat océanique) is located in the west of France. The winter is mild and summer is fresh with much rain. Typical city is Brest.
2. Continental climate (climat continentale) is found in the regions far from the sea (eastern and central France) The winter is cold and has quite hot summer. Typical city is Strasbourg.
3. Mediterranean climate (climat méditerranéen) is located in the southeast of France, near the Mediterranean Sea. The winter is short and mild. The summer is hot and dry. Typical city is Nice.
4. Mountain climate (climat montagnard) is located in the Pyrenees, Alps, Massif Central. The summer is short with lots of rain. The winter is long and snowy. Typical city is Grenoble.

Seasons in France

There are four types of seasons:

1. Spring (le printemps) starts from March and ends in May. During this season, flowers bloom and trees regain their leaves. Many tourists visit gardens, parks and countryside.
2. Summer (l'été) starts from June and ends in August. It is the peak season for tourists, festivals and outdoor activities. Beaches are crowded.
3. Autumn (l'automne) starts from September and ends in November. In rural and vineyard regions, leaves change color.
4. Winter (l'hiver) starts from December and ends in February. Snowfall occurs making people to participate in sports activities.

Regions in France and Regional Food

France encompasses 18 regions: 13 in metropolitan France and 5 overseas regions. Each region presents famous food, monuments, museums and other historical buildings.

1. Auvergne- Rhône- Alpes
2. Bourgogne- Franche- Comté
3. Bretagne
4. Centre- Val de Loire
5. Corse
6. Grand Est
7. Hauts- de- France
8. Île- de- France
9. Normandie

- 10. Nouvelle-Aquitaine
- 11. Occitanie
- 12. Pays de la Loire
- 13. Provence- Alpes- Côte D’Azur
- 14. Guadeloupe
- 15. Réunion
- 16. Guyane
- 17. Mayotte
- 18. Martinique

- Grand Est, Hauts- de- France, Île- de- France are located in the Northern France.
- Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Occitanie, Provence- Alpes- Côte D’Azur are located in the Southern France
- Bourgogne- Franche- Comté, Auvergne- Rhône- Alpes, Centre-Val de Loire are located in the Central France.
- Normandie is located in the Northern France, near the English Channel.
- Pays de la Loire is located in the Western France, below Bretagne and Normandie.
- Corse is located in the Mediterranean Sea
- Guadeloupe and Martinique are found in the Atlantic Ocean
- Réunion and Mayotte are found in the Indian Ocean
- Guyane is located in South America

Famous Regional Food

- Auvergne- Rhône- Alpes – Fondue Savoyarde, Gratin Dauphinois
- Bretagne – Crêpes, Kouign-amann
- Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur – Bouillabaisse, Ratatouille
- Grand Est – Choucroute Garnie, Quiche Lorraine

The most famous cheese in France is Camembert from Normandie.

Education in France

France provides high-quality education to learners both within the country and internationally. Schooling is compulsory for children aged 3 to 16. Public schools are free and follow a national curriculum set by the Ministry of Education.

Difference between France and Indian Education system

Education system in France	Education system in India
Early childhood education	Early childhood education
L’ école maternelle (2 to 6 years)	2 to 6 years
Primary education	Primary education
L’ école primaire (6 to 11 years)	6 to 11 years
Level/class : 12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7	Level/class : 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Secondary education	Secondary education
Le Collège (lower secondary, 11 to 15 years)	Level/class : 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
Level/class : 6, 5, 4, 3	Secondary School Certificate Examination
Students obtain “Brevet”	15 to 17 years
Le Lycée (upper secondary, 15 to 18 years)	Level/class: 11, 12
Level/class : 2, 1	Higher secondary
Students obtain “Baccalauréat”	Senior School Certificate Examination

Higher education	Higher education
Universities	College:
Grandes Écoles (elite institutions)	Arts and Sciences 3 years
Specialised higher schools (engineering, business, arts)	Engineering/Doctor 5 years

Paris: France's Capital and City

- Paris is located in the Northern Central France. It is also called “The City of Lights” (La Ville Lumière) because of its centre of “Enlightenment Thought” and “Early Adoption of Street Lighting”. The city is the Second largest population in Europe and it has been a centre of cultural, educational and touristic attractions.
- Paris is the first city for filmmaking, invented by Auguste and Louis Lumière in 1895.
- The first film is “L’Arrivée d’un train en Gare de La Ciotat (The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station)

Well Known Monuments and Museums

- La tour Eiffel
- L’Arc de Triomphe
- Le Panthéon
- Basilique du Sacré - Cœur
- Notre-Dame de Paris
- Musée du Louvre
- Centre Pompidou
- Musée d’Orsay

Notre-Dame de Paris and **la tour Eiffel** are the most visited monuments.

Musée du Louvre is the world’s largest and most visited art museum.

Musée Marmottan Monet, Musée Rodin, Petit Palais, Les Pavillons de Bercy - Musée des Arts Forains are less visited museums.

Famous Parisian food

- Croque – Monsieur
- Escargots
- Steak frites
- Soupe à l’oignon
- Crème brûlée
- Macarons
- Mille-feuille
- Éclairs
- French people have light meals for breakfast such as Croissant and Baguette accompanied with coffee, tea and hot chocolate. Cereals and fruit salads are also included in the breakfast.
- They usually have desserts after lunch and dinner.

The Arrondissements in Paris

Paris is divided into twenty arrondissements. It starts from the centre of the city and goes in a clockwise direction forming a snail shell shape. Each has a specific name and some famous monuments or museums associated with it. All the arrondissements are not equally famous globally. Some of them are world-famous, visited by many tourists and others are less known and less visited by tourists.

The most visited arrondissements are 1, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 18.

- In the 1st arrondissement, Musée du Louvre is located.
- In the 2nd arrondissement, Cathédrale Notre- Dame de Paris and Centre Pompidou are located.
- In the 5th arrondissement, Panthéon is located.
- In the 7th arrondissement, la tour Eiffel is found.
- In the 8th arrondissement, Arc de Triomphe and Champs- Élysées are found.
- In the 18th arrondissement, Basilique du Sacré- Cœur and Place du Tertre are found.

The least visited arrondissements are 2, 10, 13, 15, 17 and 20.

Festivals in France

The French Festivals are celebrated for the nation’s unity, community and cultural identity.

Famous Festivals

- **Bastille day – 14th July**

It symbolises the beginning of the French Revolution and the end of the French monarchy. It celebrates liberty, equality, fraternity with fireworks and military parades.

- **Cannes Film Festival – Mid May**

It is an important and prestigious film festival. It awards “Palme d’Or” for the best film.

- **Nice Carnival – Mid February**

It is famous for extensive parade of floats decorated with flowers along with music, dance and fireworks which end with the burning of the “Carnival King”.

- **Music Festival – 21st June**

It is celebrated in streets, parks, concert hall, restaurants attracting many people to join the concert for free.

Conclusion

The geography, different climates and seasons, regions, French gastronomy, the capital city, monuments, museums and festivals completely indicate the “Essence of France”.

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