



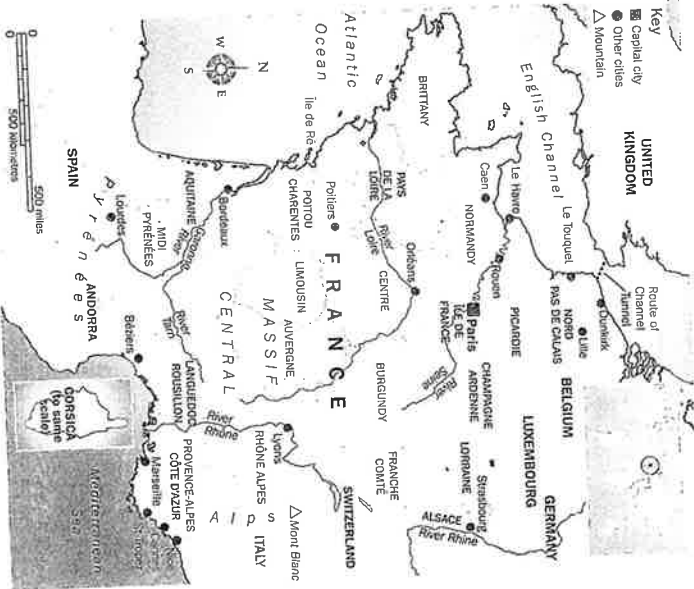
Discovering France

France is an industrialised nation in western Europe and is almost as big as the US state of Texas. France has a long and rich history. Today it is best known for its fine cuisine, its artistic culture and its beautiful and varied scenery.

The French empire

France has been a major world power for centuries. In 1789, the French Revolution saw the birth of the modern French republic. In the nineteenth century France went on to build one of the world's greatest empires, with colonies in North America and all over Africa.

Today, France still has territories overseas. Guadeloupe and Martinique are two islands in the Caribbean Sea. Réunion is an island off the coast of Madagascar. French Guiana is part of South America. In addition, the Mediterranean island of Corsica is directly ruled by France. These areas are known today as 'overseas departments' of France.



DID YOU KNOW?
The French motto 'Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité' dates back to the French Revolution. Freedom, equality and brotherhood are still important values for all French people.

French rule

During the Second World War (1939-45), France suffered badly under the Nazi occupation. Afterwards, it worked hard to rebuild its economy and infrastructure, and gradually restored relations with Germany.

Today, it is a democratic country with a president and a national legislature. The French people elect a president – currently Nicolas Sarkozy – who serves a five-year term. The president chooses a prime minister to head the government.

France is a founding – and leading – member of the European Union (EU) and has close ties with its European neighbours. EU citizens are allowed to cross European borders freely in search of work, and EU member countries work together at national level to boost trade and raise living standards.

France today

Today the people of France enjoy a relatively stable economy, a high standard of living and generous leisure time. They live in a country with fertile farmland and vineyards, popular mountain ski resorts and beaches on the Mediterranean, Atlantic and northern coasts.

With its rich natural resources and complex and fascinating history, it is no wonder that France is the most visited country in the world, regularly attracting 75 million tourists a year.

France Statistics

Area: 547,030 sq km
(214,209 sq miles)

Capital city: Paris

Government type: Republic

Bordering countries:

Andorra, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Monaco, Spain, Switzerland

Currency: Euro (€)

Language: French, plus the following regional dialects and languages: Provençal, Breton, Alsatian, Corsican, Catalan, Basque, Flemish

▼ The Louvre in Paris is the national museum and art gallery of France, and the most visited museum in the world.

