

Revealing France

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Compared with the UK, France is a huge country. It is over twice the size but has only about a quarter of the population; the customs, way of life and landscapes vary enormously throughout the country but this pack gives a flavour of French life, along with some historical and geographical background.



Photo 1

Paris, the capital city of France is famous for its fascinating architecture and monuments, many of which reflect the history of the city and the country. The Arc de Triomphe is an arch built in 1836 to commemorate those who fought during the Napoleonic Wars, and underneath is the tomb of an unknown soldier who was killed in World War I. The Arc de Triomphe is at one end of the Champs Elysées, at the Place Charles de Gaulle in Paris.

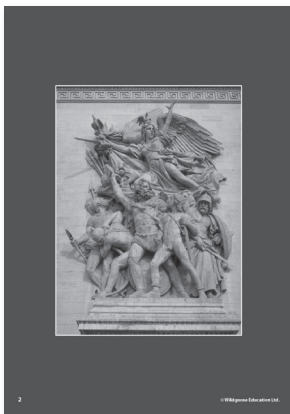


Photo 2

This sculpture is on one of the pillars of the Arc de Triomphe. The sculpture is called *Le Départ des Volontaires de 1792* or 'La Marseillaise', which is also the title of the French national anthem. It commemorates the departure of volunteers to fight for the French Republic. Other European countries still had monarchies and felt threatened by the revolution which had taken place in France in 1792, when the monarchy was abolished. The French Revolution began in 1789 when the citizens of Paris stormed the Bastille, a prison in Paris, on July 14th; this date is still celebrated in France every year.



Photo 3

This is a statue of Marianne, the symbol of the French Republic, in the Place de la République in Paris. The statue was finished in 1883 and was erected to celebrate the Third French Republic. Marianne stands on a large pedestal with three statues at the base representing Liberty, Equality and Fraternity – the motto of the French Republic.



Photo 4

Notre Dame Cathedral was built in the 12th and 13th centuries and is on a small island, the Île de la Cité, on the River Seine. It is a famous Paris landmark with beautiful stained glass windows and 2 towers. The cathedral is lit up at night. Notre Dame is also famous as the place where Quasimodo was found as a baby in Victor Hugo's novel, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Notre Dame Cathedral was built using 'flying buttresses', which can be seen in this photograph. These are the arch-shaped supports at the end of the building. From this view we can see the wall which is the edge of the island, the Île de la Cité, and the River Seine beside it.



Photo 5

The Eiffel Tower was built in 1889, for the International Exhibition of Paris which was held to mark 100 years since the French Revolution. It was designed by Gustave Eiffel, and was originally intended as a temporary structure for the duration of the exhibition. The tower is 300 metres tall, took 2 years to build and has 1652 steps to the top. In very high winds it sways up to 12cm. It is probably the most well-known landmark in Paris.

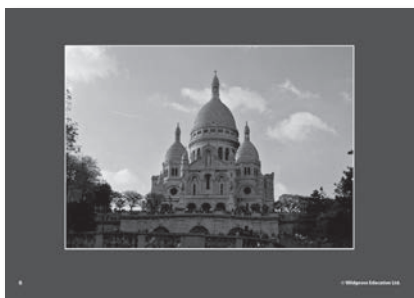


Photo 6

The Sacré Cœur is a famous Paris landmark situated on a hill in the Montmartre area of the city. It is a Roman Catholic church, built in the nineteenth century, and its main dome is the second highest point in Paris after the Eiffel Tower. As the photograph shows, the steps in front of the Sacré Cœur are a popular place for tourists to congregate and take advantage of the spectacular view over Paris.

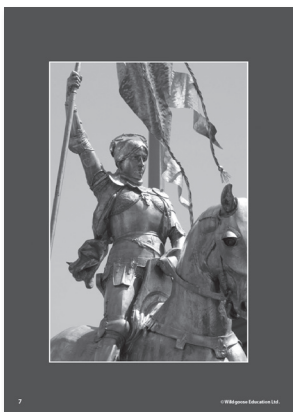


Photo 7

This is a statue of Joan of Arc, a French heroine and patron saint, who led the French army in its fight against the English in the Hundred Years War in the fifteenth century. Joan was a young girl who had visions which she believed were angels telling her to support the king of France in his war with the English army. She led the French to victory in several battles, but she was eventually captured and burnt at the stake by the English.



Photo 8

Napoleon Bonaparte was the commander of the French army at the end of the eighteenth century, and after the French Revolution he became the first Emperor of France in 1804. He brought stability to the country and introduced a number of laws, known as the Napoleonic Code, some of which are still used in France today. As a successful military leader, he created a French Empire that at one time stretched across most of Europe.



Photo 9

General Charles de Gaulle was a soldier who became the president of France after leading the French resistance to German occupation during the Second World War. He was a member of the French government when it agreed a truce with the occupying German army, but refused to accept the agreement and left Paris for London, where he declared himself leader of the Free French. He was seen as a hero after the liberation of Paris in 1944.

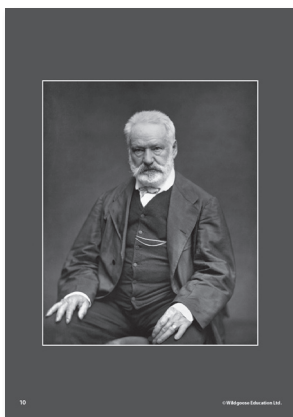


Photo 10

France is well known for its respect for intellectuals – thinkers and writers – and Victor Hugo is one of the best-known French writers of the nineteenth century. He wrote poems and plays, but his most famous works are his novels, particularly *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (and its 'hero', Quasimodo) and *Les Misérables*, which has been made into a film and a stage musical. *Les Misérables* is set in Paris in the June Rebellion of 1832, which Hugo actually witnessed.

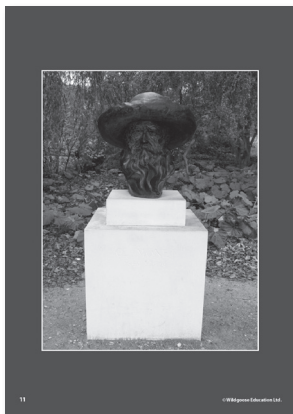


Photo 11

Claude Monet was a founding member of the Impressionist movement of painting in the late nineteenth century, which started in Paris. His painting *Impression, Sunrise*, painted in 1872, gave the movement its name. He was friends with other famous painters of the time such as Manet and Renoir. This is a bust of Monet situated near his house, which is now open to the public. Monet's house is in Giverny near Rouen in northern France. The gardens are a big attraction for tourists; Monet produced several very famous paintings of the garden, and in particular the bridge and the lily pond. The house was decorated by Monet and has been restored to show visitors what it was like when he lived there.



Photo 12

UK - 63,742,977
 Italy - 61,680,122
 France - 66,259,012
 Spain - 47,737,941
 Germany - 80,996,685

This map shows the relative sizes of France and its near neighbours. France is a relatively sparsely-populated country compared with the United Kingdom and Germany.



Photo 13

France is divided into regions for administrative purposes, and each region is made up from several départements; for example, the region of Lower Normandy (*Basse Normandie*) consists of three départements – Orne, Manche and Calvados. France has 101 départements (5 of these are overseas – French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte, Réunion) and 27 regions. Because it is such a large country there are a lot of regional differences in customs, food and physical geography.

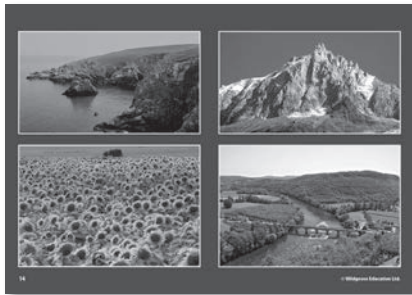


Photo 14

Here are some examples of the types of landscapes to be found in France. In the north west, on the rugged coast of Brittany (photo 14), is the Pointe du Millier; in the south east, near the Swiss and Italian borders, the snow-topped Aiguille du Midi stands at a height of 3842 metres. With its mouth at Bordeaux in the west, the Dordogne River weaves through a valley of cliffs and forests and in the far south region of Provence fields of sunflowers are in important crop.

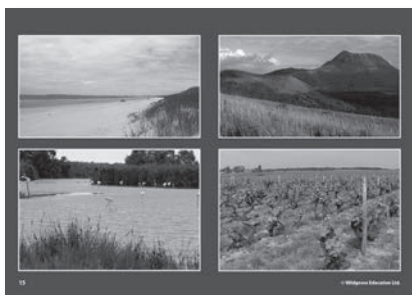


Photo 15

The variety of the countryside in France is vast. The rugged coast of Brittany contrasts with the sandy beach seen here on the west coast at Noirmoutier en l'Île near Nantes. In the centre of the country, the vast Massif Central contains the remains of extinct volcanoes; to the east, in the Beaujolais region, vineyards cover the sloping hills, and in the south, near Arles, the wetlands of the Camargue are home to over 400 species of birds, including the flamingos seen here.

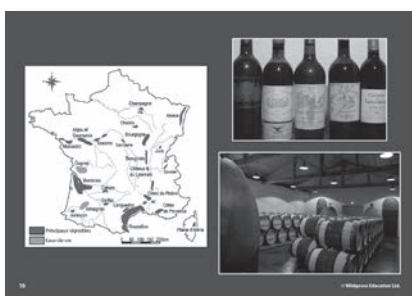


Photo 16

France is very famous for its wines. The map shows the different areas in which grapes are grown and wine is produced. The Loire Valley, Burgundy, and the Champagne region are well-known wine regions, where it is often possible to visit the vineyards, see the wine cellars with the barrels where the wine is stored and taste the wine before buying. Many wines are produced on large country estates with a large house or chateau which acts as the headquarters for the wine production.

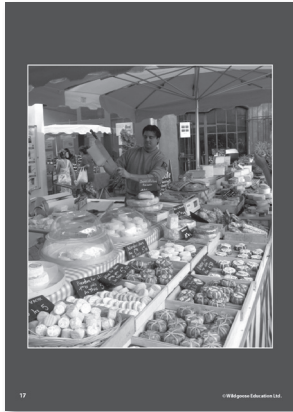


Photo 17

This photograph shows two things that are distinctive about France: its cheeses and its local markets. It is difficult to say how many different cheeses are produced in France, but it is over five hundred and may be up to a thousand. Each cheese is produced in a specific area, and is often given the name of the place it comes from. Camembert, Port Salut and Roquefort are well-known examples, and communities are very proud of their cheeses, which will often feature on the menus of local restaurants. French markets are still very common, with most towns having at least one market a week. The food on sale at the markets is good quality and the stall-holders are very knowledgeable about the food they are selling. French people generally take their food very seriously and will take their time to taste and select the right ingredients.

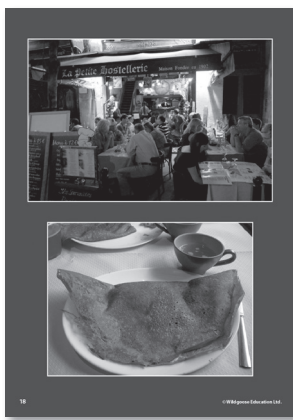


Photo 18

Eating out is a popular thing to do in France, and many restaurants have tables outside, taking advantage of the warm summer weather. It is still traditional in many areas for restaurants to serve lunches rather than evening meals. The lunches are usually three courses, often with wine or cider included, with a choice of perhaps two or three dishes per course. They are a fixed price, and are known as a '*formule*'. Again there are many regional variations in the types of food eaten; the photograph here shows a savoury pancake, or *galette*, with a cup of cider. This is a popular dish in Brittany, in the north west of France.

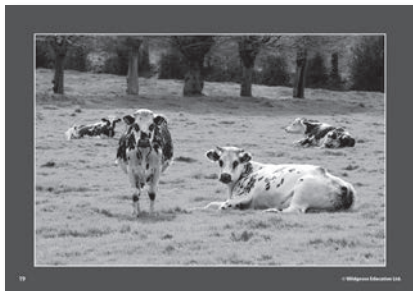


Photo 19

Normandy is a region of France famed for its dairy produce. Many of the dishes from the area include Normandy cream and butter, and Camembert, Livarot and Pont l'Evêque cheeses are produced there. These are Normandy cows, farmed for their milk and their beef. They have distinctive dark-brown markings and brown markings around their eyes that look like glasses. The Normans that invaded England with William the Conqueror in 1066 came from this region of France; they were descended from Vikings who invaded France a hundred years earlier.

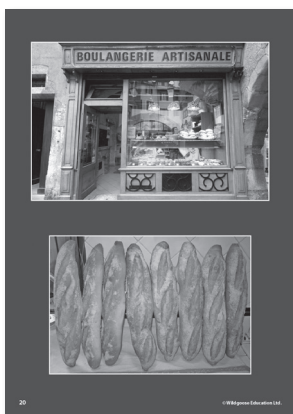


Photo 20

Bread is a central part of French life, eaten with every meal. Every small community has a baker's shop or a *dépôt de pain*, which could be a garage or an area in the community centre run by volunteers. The bread has to be bought fresh for every meal, as it becomes stale and hard very quickly. French bakers sell the loaves we know as French bread, which are called baguettes, and for breakfast they also sell *croissants* and *pains au chocolat*, which French people often dip into their coffee. Bakers are skilled craftsmen who make the bread and pastries on the premises and their work is highly respected.



Activities

- Research the history of French settlement in England, Norman conquest, Norman place names and surnames etc.
- Find out more about Joan of Arc.
- Find out more about the French Revolution.
- Research the history of France during the two World Wars.
- Research the regional variations in the French climate.
- Have a French cheese-tasting session and mark the cheeses out of ten to see which is the class favourite.
- Make signs for French shops, or create a model French village with labelled shops.
- Hold a cooking session making crêpes, French onion soup etc.
- Taste different varieties of grape.
- Research the physical geography of a particular area (the Auvergne, for example, is a volcanic region).
- Look at paintings by Impressionist painters.
- Try to paint in the style of Claude Monet.
- Locate the landmarks shown on the photos on a map of Paris.
<http://www.paris.org/Maps/MM/>
- Look at a map of the Paris Métro system and work out routes between 2 landmarks shown on the photos.
- Set up a French café in the classroom, with a menu in French and prices in euros.
- Set up a French market in the classroom.
- Try a typical French breakfast.























