Sports & Culture in France: *La vie sportive*

PROGRAM HANDBOOK MAY TERM 2015

![Europe Study Abroad](image)

LEARNING ABROAD CENTER

University of Minnesota
Important Names & Addresses

In the United States

Learning Abroad Center
Study, Work, Intern, Travel & Volunteer Services
230 Heller Hall
271 19th Avenue S.
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0430
Phone: 612.626.9000
Fax: 612.626.8009
Toll Free: 888.700.UOFM
Email: UMabroad@umn.edu
Website: UMabroad.umn.edu

Ben Tully, Enrollment Specialist
612.625.0475
tully025@umn.edu

Amber Bathke, Associate Program Director
612.626.2234
abathke@umn.edu

Dr. Heidi Soneson, Program Director
612.625.2571
sones001@umn.edu

In case of emergency, contact the Learning Abroad Center
at 612.626.9000 at any time. If it is after business hours, a
recording will give you a number to call. The Learning Abroad
Center has someone on call to deal with emergencies and
can contact the on-site director if needed. Once overseas,
participants should contact Françoise Chaton in case of an
emergency. Contact information will be given out in an email
closer to your departure date.

In France

Mme Françoise Chaton, On-Site Director
University of Minnesota Program
6, Impasse Cité Gelly
34000 Montpellier
France

Program Emergency Cell Phone:
011.33.6.11.86.39.67

Telephone Codes

To dial internationally from the US, you have to dial 011.
France’s country code is 33. French phone numbers are listed
as ten numbers, separated into groups of two, with the first
number being zero. When you call a French number from
outside the country, you drop the initial zero.

For example, to call the French phone number
04.55.66.77.88 from the US, dial:
011-33-4.55.66.77.88

Time Differences

France is in the Central European Time Zone. In May and
June, it is seven hours ahead of Minneapolis.

Program Health & Safety

Program health and safety information is available at
Dear Sports & Culture in France Participant:

Félicitations: vous avez été accepté(e) pour le programme de Montpellier. C’est formidable.

As the On-Site Director for this program, I really look forward to meeting you in Montpellier. I am sure that you will find our medieval city attractive. Montpellier is the site of one of the oldest universities in France and hosts about 70,000 students. It definitely has the flair of a student town with its population of 350,000 people and numerous cultural activities for young people. I have no doubt that you will meet lots of French people during your stay here.

Montpellier is located only five miles from the Mediterranean Sea and the Cevennes Mountains, which you will see as you land, are only one hour away. East of Montpellier you will find the beautiful region of Provence, and about four hours away by car you reach the Alps. With Paris only three and a half hours away on the fast train and Barcelona three hours away, you will have plenty to explore on weekends and during official holidays.

After graduating from the University of Liege in Belgium, I came to Minneapolis for my graduate studies. I taught for ten years at the University of Minnesota and for five years at Carleton College before I accepted the position as On-Site Director in Montpellier. I am also on staff at the University Paul Valéry. Do count on me to always try to do my best to help you with academic and other matters.

A très bientôt, donc.

Françoise Defrecheux-Chaton
Directrice du Programme

Introduction

This guide provides an overview of the Sports & Culture in France program. It addresses program options, academic issues, information about your housing options, and cultural information. Use this guide in conjunction with the Learning Abroad Center’s website, the online Health and Safety orientation, and the in-person orientation or the online Montpellier orientation. These materials contain essential information regarding the Montpellier program as well as your responsibilities as a participant in a University of Minnesota program.

Take this handbook with you to France because it contains information that will be useful before, during, and after your stay. As part of your preparation, you are encouraged to read other sources of information about France and Montpellier. You will find a recommended reading list in the appendix of this handbook. The better prepared you are, the more quickly you will adjust to and function effectively in French society.

As a Sports & Culture in France participant, you can expect to be challenged by immersion in a different academic system, a different culture, and a whole new way of life. Expect the unexpected. Study abroad requires independence and individual initiative. As you read through this guide, do not hesitate to contact the Learning Abroad Center with any questions you may have.
Preparation & Planning

Important Policies

Policies of the University of Minnesota and the Learning Abroad Center exist primarily for the protection and safety of Learning Abroad Center study abroad participants. The Learning Abroad Center expects all participants to read, understand, and adhere to the University of Minnesota and Learning Abroad Center policies, guidelines, and contractual documents. These include academic policies, finance and cancellation policies, health and safety policies, and student rights and responsibilities: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies.

Documents

Passport

A passport is required to enter France. If you do not have a passport already, apply for one right away. Passports can take four to eight weeks to process. More information is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html.

Once you receive your passport, make photocopies of it and/or scan it and email it to yourself. Leave one copy at home and bring a copy with you as well. Always keep your passport in a safe place.

If your passport is lost or stolen, contact the American Consulate or Embassy immediately. The address of the US Embassy in Paris is:

The American Embassy
2 Avenue Gabriel
75008 Paris
Phone: 33.1.43.12.22.22

The address of the American Consulate in Marseilles (the closest Consulate to Montpellier) is:

The American Consulate
Place Varian Fry
13286 Marseilles.
Phone: 33.4.91.54.92.00

If for any reason you should have legal difficulties in France, the American Consulate or Embassy cannot intervene on your behalf. They will assist you in contacting a lawyer if necessary.

Visa

US citizens on the May program do not need a student visa. For the most up-to-date information on this process, review the information on the website at: UMabroad.umn.edu/programs/europe/montpellier/apply/visa.

Non-US Passport Holders

Students who are not traveling under a US passport may have to follow different visa procedures in order to enter France. Contact Mike Trost (trost055@umn.edu) for assistance in determining the correct visa process.

Power of Attorney

We strongly encourage you to designate someone as your Power of Attorney while you are abroad. Your Power of Attorney can act as your legal representative in a number of situations. Review the information on the website at: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/finances/powerofattorney.

Your Contact Information

If your contact information changes, you must notify the Learning Abroad Center.

Health & Safety

Health Insurance

All students enrolled at the University of Minnesota are required to have US health insurance. This includes students registered for education abroad. For more details and specific process information for students with University of Minnesota Student Health Insurance through the Student Health Benefits Office, visit the Learning Abroad Center's US Insurance webpage: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance/ushealthinsurancerequirement.

In addition to your US health insurance, the University has contracted with Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) to provide comprehensive international travel, health, and security insurance. This coverage is mandatory for all students and included in the program fee. You are covered by CISI only for the dates of the program. If you plan to travel before or after your program you should extend your CISI coverage or purchase your own insurance.

CISI does not include any preventive care, and individuals are advised to consult their medical providers for any check-ups or preventive care prior to departure.

Your CISI card and insurance policy will be emailed directly to you. Carry the card with you at all times. If you have any questions or need additional information about CISI, visit the Learning Abroad Center's insurance webpage: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance.
Medication

It is illegal to ship medication overseas, and any packages that are held at customs abroad will require payment of a high import tax before they are released. Bring all necessary medication (including such items as birth control) with you to your study abroad site.

Safety

You are responsible for reviewing the US State Department’s website at www.travel.state.gov for up-to-date information on travel to France and any other countries you plan on visiting during your term abroad.

- Female students should avoid traveling alone at night. Always walk in groups or with a male companion.
- Do not look strangers in the eye or speak to them, particularly at night, since this is considered an invitation to conversation. Use a firm “Non, merci.” or no response at all to any verbal harassment.
- Do not try to defend yourself if confronted by strangers or hagglers, particularly at night. Immediately leave the setting and seek assistance from the nearest restaurant, café, or police officer.
- Keep your personal belongings hidden. Montpellier is a metropolitan city, and pickpocketing is common.
- Use common sense when giving out your address or phone number. Set up times and places to meet others rather than give out any personal information.
- If you are living with a host family, check with them before giving out their phone number or address or inviting guests over.

Travel

If you are planning on traveling extensively in France before, during, or after the program, investigate the availability of student discounts before purchasing tickets. See our website (UMabroad.umn.edu/students/travel) for information on travel products.

Any time you travel, inform the on-site staff of your plans, including your destinations, planned return date, and contact information. Notify your friends and/or family back in the US of your destination and return date. Reserve extensive travel for the designated breaks or before or after the program.

The French train system is one of the best in the world. Students can travel from Paris to Montpellier on the TGV (train à grande vitesse). Regular train service is available for most inter-city travel.

There are many interesting possibilities for both group and individual excursions around Montpellier. Les Baux, St. Guilhem-Le-Désert, and Aigues-Mortes are all medieval cities in the area. The Camargue is a marshy delta on the Rhone known for its pink flamingos, horses, “cowboys,” bullfights, and the church of “Les Saintes-Maries-de-La-Mer,” the site of an annual gypsy pilgrimage. The Garrigue is a semi-arid, brushy area to the north of Montpellier noted for old volcanoes, caves, and fascinating geological formations.

Arrival Logistics

Coordinated Flight

The Learning Abroad Center arranges an optional coordinated flight in consultation with Village Travel, a local travel agency. This flight confirms the official arrival date and time. The program staff will meet this flight at the airport.

Village Travel will contact you directly when this information is available. Information, booking, and payment are handled directly by Village Travel. Consult Village Travel’s website for information on the coordinated flight: www.villageinc.com.

The coordinated flight cost is designed to be competitive, but priority is placed on services such as routing, ticketing flexibility, and the ability to make group reservations and to reserve specific travel dates. Travel can be arranged from any location in the US, and every attempt will be made to connect with the coordinated flight. While you are not required to choose this group flight, it is designed to offer travel in the comfort of other participants in the program.

Independent Flights

If you make your own flight arrangements, select a round-trip flight. It is extremely difficult and expensive to find a return flight if you only have booked one way.

If you plan to fly into Paris (or another location) and take a train to Montpellier, you must pre-book your train ticket. You can do so at www.tgv-europe.com/en.

If you are not taking the coordinated flight, you are required to provide the Learning Abroad Center with your flight and train (if applicable) information by the date requested.

Arrival

The on-site staff will meet students at the airport on the day and time listed for the coordinated flight. The program will cover the cost of the taxi for students arriving with the coordinated flight. Other students should budget about 50 Euros in cash for transportation to the arrival hotel. Transportation at the end of the program is not provided.
Plan to arrive in France with 200 euros in cash or easily accessible through an ATM withdrawal to pay for the required cell phone, tram pass, initial meals, and other initial costs.

Let your friends and family members know that you will not be able to contact them immediately after you arrive. You will likely be exhausted and busy with your new surroundings. Most students call or email after several days. Reassure your friends and family members that the Learning Abroad Center monitors all student arrivals and will contact the emergency contact listed on your application if you do not arrive as scheduled. Given the number of students on the program, we cannot confirm individual arrivals.

**Early Arrivals**
You are allowed to arrive before the program to do independent travel or settle in in Montpellier. However, program housing is not available until the official program start date, so if you arrive early, you will need to make your own arrangements for accommodation until then.

**Delayed Arrivals**
If there are problems while you are traveling that will delay your arrival in Montpellier, call the Learning Abroad Center at 612.626.9000 if you are still in the US, or call the Montpellier program emergency cell phone listed on the first page of this handbook if you are in France. It is imperative that you inform staff of any changes in your arrival time so that the on-site staff are aware of your schedule.

**Late Arrivals**
Late arrivals are not allowed. You must arrive at the designated arrival accommodations by 9 p.m. on the appointed arrival day. Late arrivals run the risk of losing all credit for the program. Exceptions will be made for flight delays and cancellations.

**Arrival Housing**
All students will spend the first one or two nights at a designated hotel, which is arranged and paid for by the program. Orientation will take place during the first week.

**Program End**
The program end date is published on the Learning Abroad Center program website, and the Learning Abroad Center is not responsible for students after the program finishes. You are welcome to remain in France after the program end date for independent travel. However, since the program has ended, you cannot continue to live in program housing and will need to move out by the final program date.

For your return flight to the US, be certain to have a printed copy of your e-ticket with you at the airport. Many European airports require a proof of your ticket at check-in and do not have boarding pass machines.

**Practical & Program Information**

**On-Site Support**
The on-site staff are available to help you in all aspects of your stay in Montpellier, whether it is an academic or personal issue. The program staff advises all students on the program, and patience will be required in order to have your questions answered. The on-site staff will inform you of the office hours and ask that you see them during these times for program questions. During the summer, the office is open three hours per day in the afternoons.

Be respectful of the fact that the on-site staff members have private lives to lead. Do not contact the on-site staff at nights or on weekends unless it is a true emergency. Most issues can wait until the next office hour to be resolved. In an emergency, call the emergency cell phone number, which you should keep with you at all times. Try to tackle minor questions and issues on your own. Your own ingenuity and initiative is also a great resource and part of the challenge of living in a new country.

Although our program office telephone number is provided, friends and family members should contact the Learning Abroad Center at the University of Minnesota for assistance throughout the program. Let your friends and family know that the Learning Abroad Center staff is here to provide them with any assistance and answer any questions they may have before, during, and after your stay. It is very difficult for overseas staff to handle calls from the US when they are also attending to the needs of the students on site.
Accommodations
All students in the Sports & Culture in France program will stay in an apart’hotel—an apartment-style hotel designed for extended stays. You will have several roommates from the program, and you may share a room with a student of the same sex. The apartments include a kitchenette (with utensils, dishes, pots and pans, etc.), weekly cleaning service, air conditioning, TV, and high-speed internet. The apartments are located in the Antigone area of Montpellier, close to a tram stop, the river, modern restaurants, the Olympic swimming pool, and the Polygone shopping mall. Pass through the Polygone, and you are at the Place de la Comédie, the heart of Montpellier’s social life and Centre Ville.

Liability Insurance
Regardless of your housing arrangement, you should consider carrying liability insurance from the US in case you accidentally cause any damage to your accommodations or have an item lost or stolen.

Money Matters
Personal spending habits vary too greatly to state exactly how much it will cost to live in France during the program. The amount of money students spend depends on three main factors: your personal spending habits, the amount of traveling you plan to do, and the value of the dollar. To assist in your financial planning, review the budget estimates on the website: UMasbroad.umn.edu/programs/europe/montpellier/fees.

Bring a variety of payment methods, such as cash, an ATM card, and a credit card, with you to France. If you think you might want to purchase used items, such as a phone or hair dryer, from past students via the program office, you should also bring a couple of blank US checks with you to make payment for those items.

The Euro
As part of the European Union, France’s currency is the Euro (€). The official abbreviation for the Euro is EUR. Note that the value of the dollar has been fluctuating rapidly lately. You can check the exchange rate at: www.xe.com.

Cash
We recommend that you have 200 Euros on hand when you arrive in France. You can exchange money for a nominal fee at a local bank or at any major airport in the US or overseas.

Debit Card/Credit Card
One of the easiest and least expensive means of obtaining money is at an ATM. Make sure your PIN is a numerical code with four digits. Keypads in Europe do not have letters or have them in a different order than key pads in the US and won’t accept more than four digits. Also, notify your bank that you will be travelling internationally.

If you have a debit card, this money can come directly out of your bank account and you won’t have to pay interest as you would with a credit card balance.

Credit Cards
You can also withdraw money or make purchases with a credit card (Visa is best). A credit card is also a good resource for emergency situations. When using a credit card, remember that interest is charged and the purchase price is converted from Euros to dollars based on the exchange rate the day the purchase is posted on your account in the US, not the day you make the purchase.

A tip for avoiding fees is to open an account with Bank of America, which is affiliated with the French bank Paribas. Using Paribas ATMs in France can save you some money on fees.

Travelers Checks
The Learning Abroad Center does not recommend bringing travelers checks to France. While they are a safer form of money than cash, they can only be cashed at a bank during regular business hours and therefore are not very convenient.

Wiring Money
The Learning Abroad Center does not recommend wiring money from the US because the fees for this service are very high. It is more convenient to have your parents transfer money directly into your bank account.

Safeguarding Your Money & Documents
Be careful with your money. Pickpockets do exist and generally hit when you are in a crowd. Another common place to lose money to thieves is on trains, especially when traveling at night. A money belt is a good idea to have when traveling. If your money is lost or stolen, CISI can assist you in obtaining emergency cash.
Communications

Mail
Airmail between the US and France takes seven to ten days. Surface mail takes six to eight weeks. When sending postcards, place them in an envelope, since they will be processed much more quickly, and this will ensure their delivery to the US. The rate, however, is cheaper if you send the postcard alone.

If your parents or friends at home wish to send you packages while you are in France, make them aware that they should not send expensive items that require insurance. The declared value, if any, should be minimal, since French Customs will charge a significant import tax on any packages with a significant declared value.

It is illegal to ship medication overseas. Any packages that are held at customs abroad will require payment of a high import tax before they are released. Do not plan on having your parents ship medication to you! Instead, bring all necessary medication (including such items as birth control) with you to your study abroad site. If necessary, CISI insurance can assist in determining whether and how medication can be transported to France.

Computers
Access to computers in France is more limited than in the US. The program office has about ten computers for student use. These computers are strictly intended for academic use. Due to the limited number of computers and the volume of participants on the program, do not expect the office computers to be your main computer resource. The program office does have wireless, and students can access the internet via their laptop for free.

There is also wireless availability at some cafés.

Laptops
It is helpful to bring a laptop for word processing and personal use, but you should also consider the security risks. Most students travel before, during, or after the program, and keeping a laptop safe can be challenging. Students in homestays should ask their host family whether it is okay to use their laptop at home due to the high cost of electricity. Students in apartments and dormitories should consider the possible security risks. If you do decide to take your laptop to France, ensure that your electrical cord has a surge protector box and will adjust to European voltage. You will also need an adapter for the outlet. We also encourage students to be sure their laptop is covered by an insurance policy.

Social Media
Not all countries share the same laws about freedom of expression that we have in the US. Students should keep in mind that derogatory comments, especially on social media, can result in legal claims and have extended legal implications even after a student has returned to the United States.

Telephone
In May and June, France is seven hours ahead of the United States (CST). You will need a special card to call from public phone booths. International calls can be placed using an international calling card. Both cards can be purchased from the post office or tabac stores (ask for the best rate to the US). You may also use an AT&T or MCI calling card to call the US if you have one. Check with the company for international access codes, however, as 800 numbers do not work overseas. The advantage to a US calling card, if not pre-paid, is that it is easy to call the US and have someone in the US pay your bill. The rates, however, can be high. Some US long distance companies also have special monthly international calling plans, which can save your friends and family members additional money if they plan to call you in France on a regular basis.

Cell Phones
The Learning Abroad Center requires all students to have a cell phone local to the country in which they are studying. Once you arrive in Montpellier, you can either purchase a new cell phone or buy a used one left by previous students. All used cell phones will be on display at the program office with an addressed, stamped envelope. If you would like to purchase a used cell phone, bring a blank US check with you to mail to the previous student. The Learning Abroad Center is not responsible for the condition of the used cell phones, but they are significantly less expensive than a new phone.

Communicating with Your Family
You may not be able to call home immediately upon arrival, as this may be too inconvenient, complex, or difficult. Please share this reality with your family before departure.

During certain phases of adjustment, your friends and family should be prepared to receive calls or correspondence in which you complain and talk about how frustrating everything is in the host country. While these feelings should be taken seriously, students abroad tend to call and write home when things are not going so well and do not call or write when things are going well; share the many new and exciting experiences you are having as well—offer an honest, balanced report.
Working Abroad

May Term students are not allowed to work during the program.

FERPA

The Learning Abroad Center and the Office of Student Finance, in compliance with the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and Regents policy, cannot share financial or academic information with a third party (including parents, spouse, guardians, etc.) without your written permission. You can download a Student Information Release Authorization at www.onestop.umn.edu. Complete the form and send it to OneStop Student Services, 200 Fraser Hall, 106 Pleasant St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455. The Learning Abroad Center must receive a copy of a notarized Power of Attorney form in order to share any program-specific information.

Academics

Registration

All students will register at the University of Minnesota for a block of foreign studies credits prior to departure. University of Minnesota–Twin Cities students will register themselves for both courses. The Learning Abroad Center will register all non-University of Minnesota students and students attending other University of Minnesota campuses. Late fees will be applied to your account if you do not register yourself in a timely manner.

Dropping Courses

May Term students may not drop any classes, since it is a set curriculum.

Books & Materials

A reading packet and course materials will be provided to you in class.

You can purchase notebooks or paper in France. They are usually more expensive than US products but are also a small part of the cultural experience that you can take home with you. If you are concerned about saving money on supplies, bring notebooks from home.

Exams

It is not possible to take exams early at the end of the program. Be prepared to stay until the end of the term listed on the program calendar. Students who leave early may not receive credit for their studies.

Grades & Transcripts

The professors in France will give you grades according to the French system, which is significantly different from the grading system used in the US. You will be given a number grade out of a total of 20 for each assignment. This number does not necessarily indicate the number correct, but is rather an evaluation of the work on a scale of 1–20. The grades will be translated to the US system in the following manner:

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<tr>
<th>French Grade</th>
<th>University of Minnesota Grade</th>
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<td>(A–F)</td>
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<td>15.1–20.0</td>
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<td>14.1–15.0</td>
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<td>13.6–14.0</td>
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<td>C–</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.1–10.0</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.0–8.0</td>
<td>F</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

W—Withdrawal; student has withdrawn from the course and will not receive a grade
NR—Not Reported; grade not received from the faculty member
I—Incomplete; granted only in case of approved request

Effort does not assure you a good grade. Just as in the US, you will earn a grade based on effort and ability, and you should not expect an A just because you worked hard.

Incomplete Grades

You are expected to complete all course requirements by the end of the term. In the case of extenuating circumstances, you may be able to request an incomplete if the faculty member and the on-site director will allow it. Consult with the on-site director and complete a Request for Incomplete Form. The approval form will include a faculty signature and timeline for completion of the course requirements. At no time may the timeline for completion exceed 12 weeks. If you fail to complete your assignments within an approved incomplete timeline, you will receive a grade of F. Some of the universities do not allow grades of incomplete and will record an F. It is your responsibility to check with your home institution to see if they will allow a grade of I. Students who fail to complete all required course assignments and who have not submitted an approved request for incomplete will receive a grade of F.
Grade Petitions
If you wish to question a grade issued for a particular course after the program is completed, you must provide evidence that the professor made an error in his/her grade calculation. The following are not reasonable grounds for grade appeal:

• Differences between US and host country educational systems
• Personal disappointment in the grade outcome
• Comparison with one's own prior academic record/GPA
• Failure to complete one or more assignments
• Minimum grade requirement of college/department or home university (in the case of non-University of Minnesota participants)
• Health concerns/missed classes

Contact the Learning Abroad Center to receive the Grade Petition Form if you believe an error has occurred.

Transcripts
After the program ends, the French courses will be translated into English and the French grades converted to the US grading system. These courses and grades will then appear on a University of Minnesota transcript. As mentioned previously, one transcript will be issued at the end of the program to all non-University of Minnesota students. The transcript will be sent to the address you listed on the Transcript Request Form. Check with your study abroad office for the current address to list on your Transcript Request Form. This form should be completed and returned to the Learning Abroad Center prior to the start of the program.

Penn State students: Please put your study abroad office’s address, NOT the registrar.

Academic Policy
Learning Abroad Center’s academic policies are available online at UMapabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/academic-policies.

Sports & Culture in France program participants are responsible for reviewing and understanding the following policy guidelines.

Student Grievances
Academic grievances are complaints brought by students regarding the provision of education and academic support services affecting their role as students. For grievances concerning University of Minnesota sponsored or cosponsored learning abroad programs offered through the Learning Abroad Center, students should make inquiries and appeals to the appropriate University officials, in the following order: the program representative in the Learning Abroad Center, the Director of the Learning Abroad Center, the Student Dispute Resolution Center, and the Office of the General Counsel. For complaints concerning non-University of Minnesota programs, students should make appeals to the program sponsor.

Life in France

Geography & Climate
Montpellier has a much more moderate climate than Minnesota, and the winter season is much shorter. However, this is not a tropical climate, and students frequently are surprised to find that coats and sweaters are necessary.

Average afternoon high temperatures

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<th>Oct</th>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>61</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
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</tbody>
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Cultural Differences
You will encounter many differences between French and American culture while in Montpellier. Since there are too many to enumerate in this guide, we encourage you to research on your own (see the Appendix for recommended resources). The broad attitudinal differences below are important to understanding French culture and will serve as an important base for your own research and observations.

• The concept of quick and comprehensive customer service is a uniquely US phenomenon. The French are used to a complex bureaucracy with multiple layers of authority. Be patient and do your best to adjust to the French sense of timing and process. Keep in mind that faculty and administrators will have limited office hours and will expect you to adjust to the French system.

• Extensive attention to individual needs and exceptions is also unique to US culture. Most other European countries expect individuals to adjust to standard policies and procedures. Pay attention to academic and cultural guidelines in order not to miss important deadlines (such as examinations). Do not expect the French system to provide you with reminders or detailed explanations.

• The French, in general, place a higher priority on social interaction and social engagement than is often the case in the US. You will find yourself spending more time over lunch and afternoon coffee to socialize with friends and colleagues.

• Europeans, in general, are well informed about US politics and world events and feel comfortable discussing these events in daily conversation. We encourage you to read about contemporary French events and US current events so that you can engage in discussions with new colleagues and friends.
Montpellier is a city of over 2 million inhabitants in the département of Hérault, ten miles from the Mediterranean coast and about 125 miles from the Spanish border. It is now the capital of the region called Languedoc-Roussillon. Montpellier has been famous for centuries for its university, especially its medical school. Its economic and political importance has increased in recent years by its appointment as regional capital of the new Languedoc-Roussillon region and by the massive influx of North African immigrants it has absorbed.

Montpellier, founded in the 10th century, is a young town by the standards of the region. Unlike many of its neighbors, Montpellier is not a Roman town. Its first moment of glory came in the Middle Ages when it was a station along the pilgrimage route to St. Jacques de Compostelle in Spain.

During the Reformation in the 16th century (when the Protestant religions were first founded), Montpellier became a Protestant stronghold; even today such towns as Montpellier and Nîmes have important Protestant populations. Whereas Protestants in the US tend to be conservative, in France they represent a minority population with long-time rebel tendencies. This liberal tradition accounts in part for the predominance of the Socialist Party in the region.

Because of this history of religious rebellion, Montpellier lost most of its medieval churches, with the exception of the cathedral. In compensation, it has the oldest Botanical Garden (Jardin des Plantes) in France, bestowed upon it by Henri IV (the Protestant king), and it became in the 17th and 18th centuries the object of some splendid architectural planning, which has given lasting character to the center city (Esplanade, Promenade du Peyrou, many mansions). Montpellier is also a noted art center containing several famous museums (Musée Fabre, Musée Atger, Musée d’archéologie).

Montpellier is a vibrant, student-friendly city near the Mediterranean Sea and Cevennes Mountains. Although it doesn’t look like a big city in the US, it is a metropolitan area. Locals typically commute 30–45 minutes to work or class, and you should be prepared to do the same. There are also other marks of a big city, such as graffiti and diversity. In Montpellier, neighborhoods have been intentionally mixed so that people of different ethnic groups, socioeconomic statuses, etc, all live together, rather than in separate areas as often occurs in large cities. Also, the French love dogs, but picking up their soil is not a part of the culture, so watch your step!

**Life in Montpellier**

**Electrical current runs at 220 volts, so US electrical appliances made to run on 110 volts will not work unless you bring a converter. Converters are not recommended for appliances such as hair dryers or curling irons because the current transition can cause them to spark or burn out. These appliances may be purchased inexpensively upon arrival.**

**Meals**

Breakfast, *le petit déjeuner*, is continental style including a croissant with jam, and either *chocolat chaud* or café. For a few Euros you can go to a café and order a café *(café crème, café au lait, or express; or a chocolat chaud)* and a croissant or a *tartine au beurre*.

Lunch, *déjeuner*, is usually served between 12:30 and 2 p.m. If you are living with a host family, you are responsible for providing your own lunch during the week. Businesses in smaller cities close from noon to 2 p.m., and sometimes until 3 p.m.

Dinner is rarely served before 7:30 p.m. and is generally not as heavy as lunch. It may consist typically of soup and an omelet or quiche, followed by salad, fruit, and cheese. Fast food is available, but you may be happy to hear that bread and wine are considered staples by the French Government and are therefore subsidized, which makes them extremely affordable. Cheese and pâtés are also very affordable.

Be an adventurous eater. French cuisine is famous throughout the world and each part of France is justly proud of its own distinct regional specialties. In southern France, the Spanish and Italian influence often calls for cooking with olive oil and tomatoes. Herbs and flavorings used mainly in Provençal cooking are garlic and onion, rosemary, thyme, basil, sage, and saffron. Fish and seafood are regional specialties due to the proximity of the Mediterranean. Montpellier’s own specialty is *beurre de Montpellier*, a green butter made by mixing ordinary butter with garlic and herbs.

**Tipping**

The tip is generally included in the bill in French restaurants and cafés. The term *service compris* or *prix net* indicates that the tip has been included in the total cost and no additional tip is necessary. However, it is customary to leave an additional one to three Euros, unless you received poor service. The French do not tip bartenders.

**Electricity & Water**

Electricity runs at 220 volts. The outlets are not the same as in the US. But US appliances may be purchased inexpensively upon arrival.
The following vocabulary is provided for your safety:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Phrase</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Les maladies sexuelles</td>
<td>sexually transmitted diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La pharmacie</td>
<td>drugstore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un préservatif</td>
<td>a condom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le SIDA</td>
<td>AIDS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Electricity in France is very expensive, so people tend to use much less of it. People are careful to turn on only the lights they need and always turn off the lights before leaving a room. Be careful not to overload circuit breakers and risk blowing fuses.

**Strikes**

French workers’ unions can go on strike in order to demonstrate against work policies with which they are dissatisfied. This can include university professors and administrators, the post office, the bus system, the rail system, airport workers—even students. Be prepared for this possibility and be flexible about your travel plans and activities should this occur. It is also important that students stay in touch with their parents at home and keep them calm. The US media can over-dramatize French strikes, and parents at home may find it difficult to assess student safety. In all cases, the Learning Abroad Center on-site staff ensure that students remain as safe as possible during these events. It is important for students to follow Learning Abroad Center staff instructions during these strikes, stay away from demonstrations, and avoid over-dramatizing these events to friends and family members at home.

**Meeting French People**

As a student in France, you will need to take the initiative to meet people. The program’s cultural activities can provide a forum for meeting people, but it is up to you to take advantage of this opportunity and start a conversation. Just as you have an established circle of friends in the US, the French also have established friends and habits. Don’t be afraid to start a conversation and to pursue contact in order to meet new people.

**Relationships**

Americans have been targeted by individuals interested in gaining a US passport through marriage. Be very careful about romantic relationships, and do not act quickly to formalize any relationship. Americans tend to be very naive about these issues, and our students have been used in the process and married unwittingly.

Remember that in any type of sexual relationship you are at risk for a sexually transmitted disease or AIDS. Know a person very well before developing a more intimate relationship, and always demand that you both take necessary precautions and practice safe sex.

The following vocabulary is provided for your safety:

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**Entertainment**

There are many festivals (fêtes), especially in the spring and summer. These events usually include markets, carnivals, or folk dancing. Montpellier has many points of cultural and historical interest. It is also within an hour’s train ride from other popular tourist areas. If, on the other hand, you are looking for an active nightlife, the place to go in the city is near the Place de la Comédie, a large square right in Centre Ville. There you will find bars, cafés, and entertainment. Past students have highly recommended the Médiathèque Fredrico Fellini, which is a library of film and music. Student memberships are very cheap and movies and CDs are available in any language. Watching French movies is great for language comprehension and many of these films are difficult to find in the US.

**Local Transportation**

You will find it easy to get around Montpellier either on foot, by bus, or by tram. Once in France, the on-site staff will assist you in getting a free Paul Valéry University student identification card, which will allow you to purchase discounted tickets for the bus and tram. The same ticket can be used for the bus or tram, and you can purchase them on-board, or at distributeurs automatiques. The monthly pass costs approximately 30 Euros. Bring your passport and an extra passport photo at the time of purchase.

**Bus**

There are several lines that serve the entire city. Most bus lines in Montpellier do not operate late at night. In addition, bus drivers have been known to go on strike rather frequently. This may be relevant for students living with host families in the suburbs who wish to go out a lot, although there is now a tram that runs until quite late at night. There are various ways to get around this: walking with friends, bicycling, getting a ride with a French friend, or sharing a taxi fare with friends that live in the same area. Walking alone at night, especially for women, is not a good idea. It is also advised that students avoid being alone in the train station after dark.

**Tram**

There are four tram lines in Montpellier. Refer to the Transports de l’agglomération de Montpellier (TaM) homepage at [www.tam-voyages.com](http://www.tam-voyages.com) for complete information on bus and tram routes, schedules, maps, fares, and more.

**Biking**

Montpellier is very accepting of bikers and biking. If your bike is something that you can’t live without here, you may appreciate having one abroad. Many students have found it fairly easy to purchase a used bike in Montpellier. Used bikes are advertised for sale in the area newspaper and are posted at the University. They are also for sale at the flea market. Once you are in Montpellier, ask the on-site staff for more information. Alternatively, TaM rents bicycles for long or short term.
Your Identity Abroad

Women
Cultural differences regarding the role of women can be challenging for female participants. In general, women in French society enjoy relative equality with men. However, it is not uncommon for women to experience incidents of cat-calling in France. While in the US we would call this harassment, in France it is not necessarily viewed in that way. Be prepared to find your US feminist values and understanding of the world challenged daily.

Montpellier, and France in general, is comparatively safe for women. Incidents of sexual assault do occur, but they are much less common than in major US cities. Use common sense and exercise the same caution you would in a US city, such as always walking with a friend at night and always being aware of your surroundings.

Students of Color
France is a multi-cultural society, and people of color are generally well received. African influence is particularly evident due to the cooperative projects and business exchanges France has with numerous former French colonies in Africa. There is also a large population of North African immigrants in Montpellier.

You may wish to consult the resources available at the Learning Abroad Center on issues related to students of color and learning abroad. If you have questions, contact a Learning Abroad Center staff member. For additional resources, you can contact the Office for Equity and Diversity at www.academic.umn.edu/equity.

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, & Transgender Issues
Attitudes toward sexuality vary greatly from country to country. Some cultures are open about homosexuality, and strong gay communities exist in many cities. However, some cultures and peoples are intolerant of different sexual preferences, and strict taboos or laws against such relationships may exist. We encourage you to find out how different sexual preferences are viewed overseas and where your support may exist, so that your time overseas can be as enriching as possible.

For additional resources, you can contact the Office for Equity and Diversity at www.academic.umn.edu/equity.

In general, the French are much more at ease with the idea of sexuality, although they are not as blatant about it; it is merely a part of them. In the same way, while there is certainly a strong gay community in certain parts of France, in general, individuals who are gay are not as verbal about their sexuality as in the US, and some people may not be as tolerant of different sexual preferences. It is important, therefore, to notify the Learning Abroad Center if you are gay, lesbian, or bisexual or to state this on your housing form so that staff can identify a supportive housing placement for you. There have been very successful placements in the past, but it has been important for the student to notify the Learning Abroad Center in advance.

For specific information and resources regarding gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues and study abroad, contact the Learning Abroad Center or visit the GLBT section of the website: UMAbroad.umn.edu/students/identity/gbpt. There are guidebooks and many websites that address a variety of issues and concerns of gay, lesbian, and bisexual travelers. In addition, your local libraries may also have resources of interest to you.

Students with Disabilities
In general, French culture is not as sensitive to the needs of people with disabilities as American culture, but the government has official policies and laws regarding equality of rights, and Montpellier is becoming increasingly accessible for individuals with disabilities.

Many of the disability accommodations or services that are provided at US universities may be different or unavailable overseas. Being in a new environment can also be stressful, and accommodations that you may not have needed at home may become necessary in an unfamiliar setting. Participants with any kind of disability, whether hidden or visible, should contact the Learning Abroad Center in advance to discuss their particular needs. Consult with the Learning Abroad Center staff for further information on possible accommodations.

Montpellier’s tram is fully accessible, and a local organization provides wheelchair-accessible van service within city limits for a reasonable fee.

In France, certain medications for ADD/ADHD, such as Adderall and Strattera, are not available. If you take any such medication, please contact the program team as soon as possible to make arrangements.
Coming Home

By the time you return home from France, you will have grown and changed significantly. You will probably find yourself experiencing reverse culture shock. Many students find that returning home is harder than leaving was. It is very normal to experience these feelings and you aren't alone. You are encouraged to tap into the resources available in order to make the transition home easier.

To stay connected to your study abroad experience, you may want to:

- Talk with other study abroad participants
- Become a classroom visit intern
- Assist with future Montpellier orientations

Finally, visit the Returned Students section of our website: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/process/reentry.
The On-Site Experience
What happens when you suddenly lose clues and symbols that orient you to situations in everyday life? What happens when facial expressions, gestures, and words are unfamiliar? The psychological discomfort and adjustment period in a foreign country is commonly known as culture shock or cultural adjustment.

You will almost certainly experience some form of culture shock. It might hit you after two days, two weeks, or two months—timing varies widely for different people. Six common phases of cultural adjustment are listed below. These may be out of order for you, one phase may last longer than another, or you may skip a step entirely.

**Initial Fascination:** On arrival your surroundings seem glamorous and exotic, and you feel like the focus of attention and activity.

**Initial Culture Shock:** The initial fascination and euphoria fade as you settle in and you enter an emotional decline.

**Surface Adjustment:** After the initial “down” (a few days to a few weeks for most), you begin to truly adjust and settle into your surroundings. Language skills begin to improve, and you’ll feel less fatigued. Often you’ll be forming a small group of friends at this stage as well.

**Feelings of Isolation:** Difficulties in your new culture seem to stubbornly remain and you grow frustrated with the process.

**Integration/Acceptance:** After continued effort you find yourself more at ease with language, friends, professional, and academic interests. The culture you are living in is more easily examined. Differences between yourself and the society you live in become understandable and you come to accept both the situation and yourself in it, allowing you to relax and feel at home.

**Return Anxiety:** Just when you feel at home in the new country it’s time to go. Thoughts of leaving new friends raise anxiety similar to those felt before departure. You sense that you’ve changed as a person and apprehension grows when you think about people at home that may not understand your new feelings and insights, yet you may feel guilty for wanting to stay.

When in any of the above phases you may experience: changes in sleeping habits, feelings of helplessness or hopelessness, loneliness, depression, unexplainable crying, placing blame for difficulties on the program or host culture, homesickness, getting angry easily, increase in physical ailments or pain, compulsive eating, or lack of appetite.

Other symptoms may manifest themselves as well. It is important to understand these are part of a normal process of adjustment, however, if uncomfortable feelings persist for extended periods or seem unbearable, seek assistance from your program’s on-site support staff.

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**Cultural Adjustment Curve**

Adjusted from Oberg (1960) and Gallahorn (1963)
Resources

Books

*A Year in Provence*, by Peter Mayle. This novel is told from the humorous perspective of a British citizen living in southern France.

*A Year in the Merde*, by Stephen Clarke.


*Cultural Misunderstandings: The French American Experience*, by Raymonde Carroll. Serious study of several points of contrast between French and American culture and values.

*Culture Shock, France*, by Sally Adamson Taylor. This is an excellent general guide to all aspects France and the French.


*French or Foe*, by Polly Platt. A lively, practical study of how to get along with the French; explores the cultural hurdles to understanding them.

*Savoir-Flair: 211 tips for Enjoying France and the French*, by Polly Platt.


Films

*Au revoir, les enfants*
Louis Malle directed this film based on events that occurred he attended a boarding school during WWII.

*Cité des enfants perdus*
A scientist in a bizarre, surrealist society kidnaps children to steal their dreams, hoping that they slow his aging process.

*Delicatessen*
Post-apocalyptic surrealist black comedy about the landlord of an apartment building who creates cannibalistic meals for his odd tenants.

*Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources*.
These two films give an excellent picture of the scenery and culture of southern France.

Web

[www.france.com](http://www.france.com) (General France site)

[www.us.franceguide.com](http://www.us.franceguide.com)
Practical and tourism information about France

[www.ot-montpellier.fr/en](http://www.ot-montpellier.fr/en)
Montpellier’s tourist information site

[www.zompist.com/frenchcult.html](http://www.zompist.com/frenchcult.html)
Perhaps slightly out of date and a bit tongue-in-cheek, but an amusing and generally enlightening insight into French culture

[www.languedoc-france.info](http://www.languedoc-france.info)
Information about Languedoc-Roussillon
Since you will be carrying your own luggage during the trip, often for long stretches in airports and bus and train stations, it is important that you pack sensibly. Take only as much as you can carry easily by yourself. One way to measure what is easily carried is to pack everything you would like to take, pick it all up, and walk around the block. If you are not comfortable doing so, you may want to re-evaluate what you’ve packed.

**Important**: Take clothing that needs a minimal amount of care (this is especially important if you plan to do any independent traveling). You may have to go a couple of weeks without doing any laundry, especially at the beginning of the program. Laundermats will be the only means of doing laundry if you plan to live in the dorms or an apartment. Laundermats are expensive and complicated to use, and it may take some time to make arrangements for your laundry in Montpellier. Dryers are available in laundromats, but not usually in private homes.

Many travelers to Europe find that the most practical solution is to wash all underwear by hand and to take only such outer clothing as can be worn many times without showing soil. Jeans are as common in France as here. Students dress very comfortably, but with style in France. Nice jeans, skirts (for women), nice but comfortable walking shoes, dark colors, and sweaters are all very popular items.

Keep in mind that you cannot ship materials to the program in advance. Any items you wish to mail should be sent by friends or family members after your arrival.

**Suggested Clothing to Pack**

(These are only suggestions; you should adjust accordingly to your own personal tastes and style.)

- Underwear
- Socks
- 4 shirts
- 1–2 sweaters
- 2 pair jeans or pants
- 1 nice outfit
- 1 pair pajamas
- Comfortable walking shoes
- 1 pair dress shoes
- 1 pair beach shoes or sandals
- 1 swimsuit plus beach towel
- Raincoat
- Jacket for cool weather
- 2 pairs of shorts/2 skirts
- Sunglasses and sunhat
- Accessories

**Other necessary items may include:**

- Toothpaste and toothbrush
- Comb/brush
- Dental floss
- Shaving kit
- Deodorant
- Feminine hygiene products
- Temporary supply of soap, shampoo (in unbreakable containers)
- Aspirin or other painkiller
- Supply of prescription medicine
- Extra pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses
- Sewing kit
- Safety pins
- Umbrella
- French phrase book
- French-English dictionary
- Lightweight sleeping bag or sleep sack (if you plan to travel and stay in hostels)
- Camera (and all necessary equipment)
- Travel alarm clock

Most of these personal items can be found in France; however, you may want to bring enough of your favorite brands to last you during your stay. Students also note that products in France tend to be more expensive than in the US.
Don't forget to also bring along the following:

- A supply of any prescription medication you take, sufficient for the duration of your time abroad. Contact CISI for help if you are unable to obtain a sufficient supply in advance.

- Copy of your insurance policy number and medical information concerning allergies, medications, blood type, immunization history, eyeglasses, or other prescriptions

- CISI card and brochure

- Photocopy of your passport and visa (scan your passport and email a copy to yourself)

- Photocopy of front and back of any credit/ATM cards you bring with you

- Handouts from the online orientations

- This Montpellier Program Handbook

- Important phone numbers and email addresses of advisers at your home university

Pre-Departure Checklists

Visit your University of Minnesota online EA application to view your Confirmation, Pre-Departure, and Financial Aid checklists. You are responsible for the reviewing and completing all items on these checklists. Also be sure to regularly check your UofM email account for updates from the Learning Abroad Center staff. Important information will be communicated to you via email prior to your departure.
Comments from Past Participants

What kinds of cultural adjustments did you make?

- I had to learn to wait. Everything—the supermarket lines, pedestrians, posting of grades, etc.—takes longer in France.
- Everything closes from noon to 2 p.m. and for the day at 7 p.m. However, this is subject to change at any time. No offices are dependable and they might close down for the rest of the day, especially banks.
- Kisses. Kisses for gifts, saying hello and goodbye.
- Bathing less often.
- Wearing the same clothes over and over again.
- Eating later/longer. The meals are big, important, fancy.
- Relationships (friendly or romantic) work differently.

What advice do you have on packing?

- Bring simple clothes, a lot of black clothes, and more accessories (earrings, bracelets, necklaces). Bring your laptop.
- Pack light. You will buy stuff while you are there and will want to bring it home and besides, you will be sick of your clothing at the end of it anyway.
- Do not buy a bunch of stuff when you arrive because you don't want to blow a bunch of Euros when you first arrive, you will regret some of the purchases.

What would you tell other students about gender issues in France?

- I would tell the girls to walk in pairs or groups.
- French men will call call everyone but if you ignore it and don't respond in English it is fine.
- Girls should avoid direct eye contact with men, even though it sounds extreme. Be very careful when dealing with strangers, especially if you are alone.
- I was on the receiving end of a lot of very aggressive behavior coming from young Muslim men. I look like I could be of North African descent, I was often with a friend who is Kuwaiti and we were usually the only two Muslim-looking girls not wearing a veil, which, I think is perhaps why the young men gave us such a hard time. I would tell future students about this behavior, especially if they look Moroccan or Algerian, because dealing with men following me, yelling at me, calling me names, constantly, was not a pleasant experience.

What advice do you have for future students?

- Go out and make friends with the program's social assistants and meet other French people through them.
- Much of your experience is based on what you make of it.
- Talk to people and get integrated. You have to be making the calls to be friends with the French people whereas it's really easy to just hang out with Americans all the time because you're all in the same boat.
- Make sure to take advantage of all the opportunities you are given when you are abroad, you don't want to miss out on anything.
- You will spend more money than you thought, but don't hold back. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Explore Montpellier, I regret that I did not spend more time exploring the city.
- Honestly, I found it frustrating that many students stuck with their same friends from back home and did the same things like going out drinking. That's fine, except that it seemed they were too busy continuing to live their own culture than trying to experience a new one.

What was the most difficult part of studying in Montpellier?

- Just the initial arrival and living with a family was a little scary, but after a couple weeks, it was fine.
- Getting adjusted to taking the bus/tram all the time.
- Adjustment to host culture.
- Dating—never worked out.
- Leaving the country and all my friends in the host country, that was the hardest thing to do.
- Budgeting.
- The first part where I experienced culture shock and I missed everyone at home.
- Making friends. It's a much more closed culture for friendships than I expected.