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. During the summer months, it is seven hours ahead of Minneapolis.

Program Health & Safety
Program health and safety information is available at http://global.umn.edu/gosafe/index.html.
Dear Study Abroad in Montpellier 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.

The campus of the Fac des Lettres is located in a newer area of town and is where most of your classes will meet. You have a large choice of classes ranging from integrated classes at any of the University of Montpellier campuses, to classes organized for foreign students, to classes organized specifically for our program. My staff and I will be there to help you select courses according to your level of French and interest.

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.

Our on-site staff of four help me with daily management of the office. Our social assistants, who are French, will organize activities and are responsible for the newsletter we publish every Monday. We all really look forward to welcoming you to Montpellier and to our program.

A très bientôt, donc.

Françoise Defrecheux-Chaton
Directrice du Programme
**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](http://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](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 summer 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](http://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](http://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](http://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 web page: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance](http://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 host family or friends as well as your family back in the US of your destination and return date. Reserve extensive travel for 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. You can get a railway discount card that can be purchased at the train station. It is called the 12–25 (douze vingt–vingt) card because it is only available to people between the ages of 12 and 25. It is worthwhile if you do any train traveling.

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 that has a flexible return date. 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 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. Intensive French students will have a language placement exam the Tuesday after arrival, and orientation begins promptly the morning after the arrival day. No makeup exams or orientation will be given, and 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.

Cultural Opportunities

One excursion to a site of interest in or around Montpellier is included in the program fee. Additionally, the program’s social assistants organize weekly activities to familiarize you with the city and provide you with opportunities to meet French students.

Speak French

Speak French as much as you can, with whomever you can, wherever you can. You will not regret it. Some past participants have made pacts with other program participants to speak only French with them. Once you start the habit, it will be easier and easier to maintain, and you will be happier for it in the end.

Accommodations

Tips on Adapting to Your New Environment

Part of your experience in France will be to adjust to the French way of life. Communication and adaptability is key in working toward the best housing experience possible. While no housing situation will ever be perfect, some situations may be remedied, and making the best of your housing situation is a two-way street. In the beginning, give yourself and others a couple of weeks to adjust to the situation. As you encounter difficulties, first look within yourself to see what changes you can make. In general, any initial housing problems can usually be resolved by talking about it and remaining open to change. If you continue to find yourself in a difficult living situation, speak with the on-site staff. They will try to work through your housing situation with you. Remember, study abroad is a cultural experience and things will be different, but entering into the experience with an open mind can make the daily challenges of living in Montpellier one of the most rewarding parts of your study abroad experience.

French housing is quite different from housing in the US. Montpellier is very historic, which means that housing will be in buildings that may be hundreds of years old. In fact, the older a home is, the more desirable it may be to the French, even if stairs creak, paint peels, and space is cramped. Living in Montpellier is one of the most attractive and expensive areas to live, but space is at a premium. If you are placed in a homestay in the suburbs, you need to adjust your expectations to be realistic for the conditions and lifestyle and enjoy your experience, whatever it may be.

French neighborhoods differ from most US neighborhoods in that you will find a diverse mix of people living together in the same area. In Montpellier, neighborhoods house individuals from a variety of ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds. You should be prepared for this difference. Living in a typical French neighborhood is an excellent insight into French culture.

Notification of Placement

You will be notified of your housing placement as soon as the Learning Abroad Center receives the finalized placement information from overseas, approximately two weeks prior to departure. All housing arrangements are subject to change. Your housing arrangements begin on the scheduled date of arrival and continue until the official end date of the program. Refer to the program calendar on the Learning Abroad Center website for exact dates.

Changing Your Housing

Students switching housing once a placement has been made will be charged a housing placement fee and may be required to pay a financial penalty. The amount of the financial penalty will depend on the individual circumstances. Any reimbursement for changes in housing will be credited to the student’s UofM student account. Reimbursements will not be distributed on site, and students in apartments must be prepared to pay additional on-site costs such as utilities and food. Any change in housing must be discussed with the on-site staff in advance.

Students who fail to act in a manner appropriate to their housing situation overseas may be dismissed from the program at the discretion of the on-site director. The on-site director also has the authority to change housing arrangements and assess a financial penalty if a student is disorderly or fails to act responsibly and courteously with their host family, roommates, or landlord.
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.

Homestay

Location
In order to provide program participants with their own room, homestays are located in the suburbs and greater Montpellier where sufficient larger homes exist. The commuting distance is approximately 30–45 minutes by public transportation one-way. There is a tram that runs until approximately midnight. If you stay out late at night, you will need to take a taxi back to your homestay or stay at a program participant’s apartment rather than return home late on a weekend night. The homestay is the best choice if you want to maximize the opportunity to speak French and are interested in participating in French family life and culture.

Benefits
You will have your own room, a desk for studying, linens, sheets, blankets, and pillow. The homestay option includes two meals per day during the week (breakfast and the evening meal) and all meals on the weekend, if you are home. Lunch is typically eaten on campus during the week at the cafeteria for a nominal fee (approximately 5 Euros). There is only one program participant per homestay, although a host family may elect to host a student from another program as well.

Realistic Expectations
On your housing form, you have the opportunity to state your ideal preferences. While the on-site staff reviews the housing forms carefully, do not expect your host family placement to perfectly match your preferences. The on-site staff balances the needs of many students and will make a placement that they feel is best suited to you. Families in France are as diverse as families in the US; every family will be different and the level of integration will vary.

Host families in France are not meant to be replacement parents or a replacement family support system. Living with a host family gives you the opportunity to see how French family life functions and to participate in some aspects of that life. Host families are not expected to provide the same level of care and involvement that you would receive from your own family in the US.

Accept differences in your French family’s lifestyle and accommodations with an open mind. Remember that you need to adjust to the lifestyle of the host family. In general, you will find that French family life is quite different from American family life. Although you may not like all aspects of the host family’s habits or lifestyle, view this as an opportunity to speak French and understand how French families live. This will require you to adjust to new habits and some constraints that you would not experience if you were living on your own.

Considering all aspects of your homestay to be a cultural and learning experience will go a long way in helping you to understand the differences that you are sure to encounter. Expect that there will be a period of adjustment. The host family needs time to get to know you, and you need time to build their trust.

Tips for a Successful Homestay
The program requires that you abide by the guidelines established by the host family and that you spend time participating in their family activities. This is not a boarding house arrangement. Maintain reasonable hours and spend time with the host family on a regular basis. Always inform the family of your plans, and of any changes in your plans. If you will not be home for dinner, inform your host family ahead of time. Also, greet your family when you come home and say goodbye when you are leaving.

Housing Contracts
The Learning Abroad Center ensures that both participants and host families are aware of their rights and responsibilities during the program. Familiarize yourself with the sample contract in the appendix of this handbook.

Before and After the Program
Host families do not expect to host you before the program or after the program. Do not call or visit the host family prior to the start of the program. You are welcome to send them a card, letter, or email if you wish. If you plan to travel after the program, you can ask your host family if you may store your luggage at their home until you return. The host family has the right to decline if this is not convenient for them. In this case, you will need to take your belongings with you when you travel. The program cannot store your luggage.

Telephone
In general, do not use the family’s telephone unless your family offers to let you do so. It is very expensive to use the telephone in Europe, since there is a charge for even local calls. In addition, phone bills may not be itemized and there will be no way to determine the cost of your calls. To keep in touch with your family in the US, you can arrange to have them call you on your cell phone.
Utilities
Use electricity and hot water conservatively, since utility costs are very high in France. Use your host family's habits as an example. For example, never leave a light on in an empty room. In some cases, if the hot water supply is used up, there will be no hot water available for the rest of the day.

Bringing a Laptop
If you choose to bring a laptop, you should ask your host family whether they would like you to pay for the cost of extra electricity. Many, but not all, families have high-speed internet.

Laundry
If your family offers to do your laundry, do not expect them to wash every day; be reasonable with the amount of laundry you give them. Also keep in mind that most French families do not have a dryer. If you give them a load to wash, you cannot expect to wear those clothes the next day. If you are given permission to wash your clothes, be careful not to overload the machine or otherwise abuse this privilege.

Meals
Dinner in France is regarded as an important event; usually the entire family sits down at the table. French families normally eat around 8 p.m., although this varies from family to family. Inform your family early if you will be absent from dinner.

Always ask permission to eat food from the kitchen or refrigerator. If you find that you are hungry beyond what the family provides, you will need to purchase snacks. Americans in general tend to snack much more frequently than Europeans and often feel hungry much more frequently. Host families, however, are not expected to maintain American eating habits.

The midday meal during weekdays is not included in the program, though some host families may choose to provide you with a packed lunch at their discretion. An inexpensive option for lunch (about 5 Euros) is any one of the four student cafeterias. The family will provide you with lunch in addition to breakfast and dinner only on the weekends if you are at home, spending time with them. It is not appropriate to arrive home after a weekend of traveling and expect dinner to be waiting for you.

Gifts
It is customary and polite to bring a gift to your host family. The following are some gift ideas:

- Clothing and items with University logos
- Prepackaged mixes (pancakes, chili)
- Maple syrup or candy
- Calendars with US scenery
- CDs of American music
- Handmade crafts or jewelry (especially Native American)
- Bottle of wine

Dormitories
During the summer, students from all over the world come to study French in Montpellier, and most of them live in the dorms. Living in the dorms is a great way to meet new people.

Location
The dormitories are located near campus, which is convenient for classes, but a 45-minute walking distance from downtown. There is a tram stop within a few blocks of the dormitory.

Amenities
Dormitory rooms are very small (1/4 of the size of a US dormitory room) and consist of a small single bed, a small desk, lamp and small closet. Linens are available for purchase from the dormitory. Some rooms have their own very small bathroom with sink, toilet, and small shower.

Security
Unlike dormitories in the US, there is no security personnel or phone system in the dormitory and there is very little outside lighting. Keep your room locked and your belongings secured. There have been very few criminal incidents reported at Paul Valéry University, but locking your door is a common sense measure that will help to ensure personal and property safety.

Internet
Some dorm buildings have internet access and some do not. As students may be placed in different buildings, students cannot rely on Internet access at the dormitory. See the “Communication” section for further information on Internet access.

Cooking Facilities
Each floor of the dormitory has a rudimentary kitchen that typically consists only of a hot plate. In most cases, students prepare breakfast in their rooms and eat at the local University cafeteria for both lunch and dinner. Thus, all summer and semester students in the dormitory will need to be certain to budget sufficient funds for meals. Cafeteria meals are approximately $5 per meal.

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: UMabroad.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.

Bank Account
We do not recommend that summer students open an account at a local bank in Montpellier. It can take up to a month to obtain checks for your account. Students do not typically need a bank account or do not find it worthwhile to complete the administrative processes required to establish an account.

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. Surface mail is a good way to send items you may not need immediately, because it is inexpensive and allows you to travel with a lighter load initially. When sending postcards, place them in an envelope, as 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 host families and 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 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
During the summer, 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 & Work Permits
Summer 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
Program Tracks
The Study Abroad in Montpellier program offers two tracks during the summer: the Intensive French track for beginning and intermediate students of French, and the Advanced French track for advanced students of French. More detailed information on both tracks can be found at UMassabroad.umn.edu/programs/EUROPE/Montpellier/academics.

American eyes, since they are government-funded and have limited budgets for upkeep of the campus.

Registration
All students will register at the University of Minnesota for (1) a block of foreign studies credits and (2) the optional online Global Identity course 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 & Adding Courses
Summer students may not drop any classes, since it is a set curriculum.

Academic Culture & the French Educational System
Professor/student relationships in France will be quite different from the kind of relationship you may be used to in the US. Professors are not necessarily expected to be attentive to student needs and are rather viewed as academic experts who provide students with insights into the topic of the course. As a result, professors are highly regarded and command a great deal of respect. The class format is often a lecture, and professors have limited office hours. While this teaching style usually requires some adjustment at first, it is important to remain open to the differences between cultures and realize the advantages that this new system has to offer. For summer program students, classes are generally more interactive and smaller in size.

The Learning Abroad Center cannot control the quality or teaching style of the professors in France. The standards which US students consider “good teaching” in the US cannot be applied to the French way of teaching. The unique benefit of studying abroad is the opportunity to learn about the French academic system: how it is structured, what its strengths and weaknesses are, and to learn as much French as possible during your time in Montpellier.

Therefore, even though you may not have assignments to complete or much direction in your courses, you should still study the material covered in class and do your own research to learn more about the course topics.

There are several things you can do that will help you to maximize the experience of being immersed in the French educational system:

• Be patient and flexible.
• Take initiative in planning your academic program before you leave and while you are abroad.
• Practice self-discipline and adapt to cultural differences in academic and social circumstances.
• Take a self-reliant approach with your learning. You bear the responsibility for what you learn.
• Introduce yourself to your professors at the beginning of the term.
• Approach your professors if you need clarification on course material.
• Develop and maintain good study habits throughout your time on the program.

Books & Materials
You will have access to library books at Paul Valéry University for situations where research is necessary. More information on use of the library will be provided once you arrive in Montpellier.

Any required books will be purchased in Montpellier, although most courses do not require that you purchase books. However, you should bring a French-English dictionary, a verb conjugation book, and a grammar review book.

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Grade</th>
<th>University of Minnesota Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1–20)</td>
<td>(A–F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.1–20.0</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.1–15.0</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.6–14.0</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.6–13.5</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.1–12.5</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>11.6–12.0</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>10.6–11.5</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>10.1–10.5</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1–10.0</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0–8.0</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</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 allowed 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 the 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. It will take approximately three to four months after the program ends for your grades to appear on a University of Minnesota transcript.

If you are planning to graduate or apply to graduate school after the program ends, the Learning Abroad Center cannot expedite the grade process and you will need to plan for this delay.

It is not possible to issue a transcript directly from Paul Valéry University because they do not have a transcript system. All courses are reflected on a University of Minnesota transcript. Courses posted on your transcript reflect the courses you listed on the form completed on site. It is your responsibility to ensure that this form is accurate prior to returning to the US.

**Global Identity: Connecting Your International Experience to Your Future**
This optional, 1-credit online course will provide opportunities for you to reflect upon your learning abroad experience and prepare you to communicate your intercultural competence to future employers, graduate schools, or law schools. As global connectivity becomes increasingly important, you are asked to think beyond the borders of your own perception and better understand the world based on the new ideas and experiences to which you are exposed. Your ability to work in a multicultural setting and to succeed in different cultural contexts is vital to your future. This course will help you apply these skills to your post-graduation plans. The course is taught online with University of Minnesota instructors. Registration information will be provided via email. More information can be found at [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/academics/globalidentity](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/academics/globalidentity).

**Academic Planning**

**Pre-Departure Academic Planning**

**Note to University of Minnesota Students:** University of Minnesota French majors and minors will meet with the French Department undergraduate advisor at a special session in order to discuss course equivalencies to list on the Academic Planning Form. You will be notified by email when this meeting has been arranged. If you need to get courses approved for the French major or minor, you should plan to attend this session.

In general, French majors and minors will receive credit for any upper-division course with French or Francophone content in language, linguistics, literature, culture, civilization. Summer students and students on the Language and Culture option register for pre-approved University of Minnesota French language and/or civilization courses that apply toward major and minor requirements.
On-Site Academic Planning
While in Montpellier, document your studies. It will be your responsibility to collect any supporting information you may need to receive proper credit. These supporting materials may include: class notes, homework, papers, graded exams, syllabi (if provided), grade reports, transcripts, course bulletins or catalogs, and certificates of participation. Check with your academic adviser to see if there are additional materials you should bring back. The Learning Abroad Center cannot gather this information for you once the program is completed.

Note: Students do not have access to a fax machine on site. We also ask that US academic and study abroad advisers do not send faxes to students via the on-site director’s fax machine. The on-site director’s fax machine is for emergencies and program use only. You will need to make arrangements with an academic adviser or study abroad adviser to correspond by email regarding your classes.

Academic Policy
Learning Abroad Center’s academic policies are available online at UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/academic-policies. Montpellier program participants are responsible for reviewing and understanding the following policy guidelines.

Pass/Fail Option
All program courses must be taken on an A–F basis.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>July</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
Life in Montpellier

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! Finally, the campus is government-run, and students pay very minimal tuition in France, so it is not pristine. However, it is considered a very good school, so don’t let its appearance fool you. Visit the Montpellier tourism website for information on sites and activities in the area: www.ot-montpellier.fr/en.

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. With your proof of enrollment at the Paul Valéry University, you will be able to purchase tickets for a cafeteria-style meal in one of several restaurants universitaires at Paul Valéry University for about 3 Euros.

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.

Snacks

The French, in general, do not snack between meals. It is fine to continue your normal eating habits, including snacking, but keeping a few things in mind will help avoid cultural misunderstandings:

- Do not arrive to a family meal with no appetite due to snacking.
- If living with a host family, ask them if it is okay to help yourself to food between mealtimes. Some families may be okay with this, but others may prefer that you purchase your own snacks.
- Do not eat or drink (except possibly a water bottle or coffee) in class. This is not allowed and is considered disrespectful. Avoid perpetuating the stereotype of messy, disrespectful Americans by honoring this rule.
**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**
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.

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.

Most French houses do not have an unlimited supply of hot water (heated by expensive gas or electricity), so taking a long shower may mean that no one else in the family will get a shower until the water heater has had a chance to re-supply itself.

**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 and, of course, utilize your French language.

**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:

- *Les maladies sexuelles*  
  sexually transmitted diseases
- *La pharmacie*  
  drugstore
- *Un préservatif*  
  a condom
- *Le SIDA*  
  AIDS

**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 onboard, 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 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/glbt. 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.

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### 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.
Cultural Adjustment

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.

A sense of isolation sets in. Boredom and a lack of motivation often follow. Unresolved personal issues often surface during this stage.

**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.

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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, surreal society kidnaps children to steal their dreams, hoping that they slow his aging process.

*Delicatessen*
Post-apocalyptic surrealistic 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
Packing List

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. Laundromats will be the only means of doing laundry if you plan to live in the dorms or an apartment. Laundromats 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. Slippers are recommended because many French homes have tile floors throughout the house and do not use heat as frequently as most Americans.

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
- Washcloth and towel
- 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
- Verb conjugation book
- Grammar review book for easy reference
- 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
- A copy of your current transcript
- A copy of birth certificate (may be requested by the University dormitories)

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.
International Program of the University of Minnesota
Director: Mme F. Defrécheux-Chaton
University of Montpellier
Tel:
Fax:

Lodging Contract for Foreign Students
General indications of orientation
for the families hosting students from Minneapolis:

Our students are in France for a relatively short amount of time to perfect their French and to initiate themselves to French life and culture. They are participating in a program of rigorous linguistic and cultural studies; however, it is through the family stays that they will make the most important progress and that they will achieve the essential entrance into French life. In general, we ask you to help the students adapt to life in Montpellier, use transportation systems and find the sources of information they need. Above all, we would like for them to have the opportunity to integrate as much as possible into your regular family life.

In particular, you are obligated to:
1) Leave a space in your refrigerator for the student to use.
2) Use only French with them, as this is the major goal of their stay.
3) Thoroughly explain the “rules” or habits of your household.
4) Ensure, for each student, a single room with a desk.
5) Furnish a nourishing breakfast (without departing too much from your normal customs).
6) Furnish, in the evening, a substantial meal containing protein. For our students, this meal will be the principle meal of the day, given that they may not have the time, the habit, or the means to eat a nourishing meal at noon.
7) Offer the student lunch on Saturday and Sunday if the student is at the house for the weekend.
8) Help with the student’s laundry, by offering to do their laundry with yours or by allowing the student to use your washing machine (and explaining how it works).
9) Contact the program’s housing coordinator with questions you may have.
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.

Comment on your housing arrangements.

• (Homestay) My host family was extremely generous and included me on trips and excursions—an effort above and beyond expectations.
• (Homestay) Nice family. Always new and interesting people visiting or living with them. They were proud of their culture—the typical French.
• (Homestay) A bit of a commute daily; however, my host family was well worth the time I spent traveling daily. I found that meeting new people and living with a host family has changed my narrowmindedness.
• (Dormitory) For the summer program the dormitory is great. Lots of students, different cultural activities, having your own room for studying is perfect.

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 cat 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.
• Make French friends. I hung out too much with Americans in the program. I don’t necessarily regret that because I made some really neat new friends, but don’t be afraid to put yourself out there and meet others.
• What was the most difficult part of studying in Montpellier?

• The most difficult points in my experience were the moments in which I was misunderstood by my host family, and had to figure out what the misunderstanding was.

• Just the initial arrival and living with a family was a little scary, but after a couple weeks, it was fine.

• Getting used to French education system.

• 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.

• Language—you really have to throw yourself out there. I was lucky in that I lived with French people and so I was forced to speak it but I was so nervous and I still didn’t speak that much French with the on-site staff.

• Budgeting.

• The first part where I experienced culture shock and I missed everyone at home.

• Commuting from home stay to campus and to town, especially when there were strikes without warning.

• Adjusting to my host family, but all turned out well.

• Making friends. It’s a much more closed culture for friendships than I expected.