

# Teaching Practicum in France

PROGRAM HANDBOOK



LEARNING ABROAD CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

# Important Names & Addresses

## In the United States

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### Contact Prior to Departure

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Peggy Retka, Program Director  
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## Emergencies

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

Note: Please direct pre-departure questions to the Learning Abroad Center, not to the on-site staff.

Mme Françoise Chaton, Resident Director  
University of Minnesota Program  
6, Impasse Cité Gelly 34000 Montpellier France  
Program Emergency Cell Phone: 011.33.6.11.86.39.67  
(within France, dial 06.11.86.39.67)

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## 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. It is 6–7 hours ahead of Minneapolis, depending on daylight saving time. France observes daylight saving from the end of March to the beginning of October.

## Program Health & Safety



Program health and safety information is available at <http://global.umn.edu/gosafe/index.html>.

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# Introduction

## Purpose of This Handbook

Before you leave the country, make sure that you have read and understood the information in your Confirmation Checklist, the Health & Safety Online Orientation (available in your confirmation checklist), and the information outlined in this handbook. These materials will guide you on a safe and successful learning abroad experience.

Valuable resources for your friends and family members can be found at [UMabroad.umn.edu/parents](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/parents). It discusses topics such as health and safety, program prices, logistics, and travel.

## Overview of the Program

### Letter from Resident Director

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 10 years at the University of Minnesota and for five years at Carleton College before I accepted the position as Resident Director in Montpellier. I am a professor at the

Institut Universitaire de Technologie in Montpellier (IUT). 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

## Preparation & Planning

### Documents

#### Passport

A valid passport is required to enter France. If you don't have a passport, you should apply for one right away. Passports can take 4–6 weeks to process, so it's important to begin this process early. More information is available at [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/travel/passports](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/travel/passports).

#### Embassy Contact Information

Always keep your passport in a safe place. If your passport is lost or stolen, contact the local police, the American Consulate or Embassy, and the on-site staff. To identify the consulate or embassy nearest you, consult <http://usembassy.gov>.

#### Visa/Immigration Documents

The University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC) can assist you with the visa process for your time in France. Please contact us if you have questions.

#### 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. Please contact us for assistance in determining the correct visa process.

#### Power of Attorney

We encourage you to consider designating 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, including banking and tax issues. For more information, review the information at [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/finances/powerofattorney](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/finances/powerofattorney).

## Safekeeping Important Documents

Copy all of your important documents and store the copies separately from the originals. Leave an additional copy with someone in the US and keep an electronic copy in a secure location.

## Coordinated Group Flight

### Purpose & Benefits of Village Travel

The LAC 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: <http://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 reserve specific travel dates. Travel can be arranged from any location in the US or internationally, 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.

If you make your own flight arrangements, select a round-trip flight that has a flexible return date, since most students change their return date. Flying standby is not allowed.

If you are not taking the coordinated flight, you are required to provide the LAC with a copy of your flight and train (if applicable) information by the date requested.

Keep in mind that you cannot leave the program prior to the official departure date, as French exams and program courses continue until the end of the program.

### Arriving Early

Due to visa restrictions, semester and academic year students are not allowed to arrive before official arrival date listed on their student visa.

### Staying After the Program

You are welcome to stay after the program. However, program housing ends on the departure day, and so you will need to make your own accommodation arrangements for your extended stay.

### Round-Trip Airline Tickets

Round-trip tickets are the best option, since many countries require travelers to purchase a round-trip ticket as part of the visa process. In addition, one-way tickets can be expensive, and it is extremely difficult to find a return flight to the US.

## Packing

### Packing Principles

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 a bit 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 they are 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. Sweaters will be especially needed since winter temperatures drop to around freezing and the humid sea air can make the air very cold and damp. Consequently, we recommend a winter coat as well, since spring weather usually doesn't begin until sometime in March.

Slippers are recommended because many French homes have tile floors throughout the house and do not use heat as frequently as most American homes.

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.

## Important Policies

Policies of the University of Minnesota and the Learning Abroad Center exist primarily for the protection and safety of LAC study abroad participants. The LAC expects all participants to read, understand, and adhere to the University of Minnesota and LAC 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).



## FERPA

Under Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, and University policy, college students are considered responsible adults and are allowed to determine who will receive information about them. As a result, the LAC does not share academic, personal, or financial information with a third party (including parents, spouse, guardians, etc.) without the student's written permission. As part of their application, all students designate two emergency contacts who will receive information only in the case of an emergency.

## Official Communications

Your UofM email address is the official means of communication. LAC messages will be sent to your UofM email address.

# Health, Wellness, & Safety

## Health

### Health Information Form

The purpose of the form is to help the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC) to assist you in preparing for your time abroad. It is critical to disclose fully any health conditions or accommodation needs you may have on the LAC's Health Information Form. If your condition changes after completing this form or you realize you forgot to fully disclose anything, contact the LAC and provide the updated information as soon as possible.

Timely disclosure allows the LAC to support your overseas experience effectively. The information provided will remain confidential and will be shared with program staff, faculty, or appropriate professionals only as pertinent to your own well-being.

For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/healthinfo](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/healthinfo).

### Mandatory Health & Safety Online Orientation

The mandatory Learning Abroad Center Health & Safety Online Orientation contains important information on health precautions, taking prescriptions overseas, and the mandatory insurance policy in which you will be enrolled as a program participant. Refer to your online acceptance checklist for the link to this orientation information and contact the LAC with questions.

## Health Insurance

### US Health Insurance

All students enrolled at the University of Minnesota are required to have US health insurance. This includes students registered for education abroad.

The travel, health, and security insurance coverage through CISI is specifically exempt from the requirements of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and was not intended to and does not satisfy a person's obligation to secure minimum essential coverage beginning in 2014 under the ACA. The University encourages travelers to consult with their legal counsel or tax adviser for information on their obligations under the ACA.

For more details and specific process information for students with University of Minnesota Student Health Insurance through the Student Health Benefits Office, visit the LAC's US insurance webpage: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance/ushealthinsurancerequirement](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance/ushealthinsurancerequirement).

### CISI Insurance

In addition to your US health insurance, the University of Minnesota 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 and a few days to allow for travel to and from the US. 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 checkups 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 LAC's insurance webpage: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance).

## Medication Overseas

### Prescriptions

Bring all necessary medication (including such items as birth control), for the entire term of your program, with you to your study abroad site and bring it in your *carry-on luggage only*. It is illegal to ship medication overseas and will be rejected at customs. Contact the LAC if you need an enrollment verification letter to submit to your insurance company requesting prescription medication for your entire stay abroad.



Consult with your LAC program contact if you would like to consult with CISI about obtaining any medication once abroad. Some medications, including those that are commonly available over the counter in the US, are controlled or banned substances abroad. The LAC, in consultation with CISI, will assist you in determining if you can travel with your medications or if alternative solutions must be explored.

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.

## Vaccinations, Immunizations, & Travel Medicine

The LAC recommends that all students visit a travel clinic before their program abroad. Make an appointment as soon as possible so that you can get a scheduled appointment in time to complete any required and recommended immunization series. Many travel clinics often book far in advance (especially around the holidays), and some immunizations need to be started months in advance of your departure. For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/preplanning](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/preplanning).

Review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://cdc.gov/travel>) and US Department of State (<http://travel.state.gov>) websites for general vaccination, immunization, and other travel medical information for the countries you will visit. However, only a travel clinic will be able to make a recommendation tailored for your specific travel plans and health history.

## Wellness

### Wellness & Study Abroad

In addition to any medications and required vaccinations, it is important to plan proactively for how you will maintain healthy habits abroad, both mentally and physically. Consider the following guidelines for your time abroad:

- **Physical self-care:** Be physically active for 30–60 minutes daily, sleep enough to have energy through the day, spend at least an hour outdoors, and eat a balanced and moderate diet mostly of wholesome, minimally processed foods.
- **Emotional self-care:** Talk to your medical provider prior to departure about effective ways to cope with the stress that can arise from experiencing unfamiliar surroundings and lack of family and friend support, as well as to identify new ways of centering and embracing change and new experiences. This is a valuable lifelong skill.
- **Stress reduction practice:** Participate in at least one practice to quiet your mind and body. Examples include deep breathing, time in nature, prayer, journaling, sensory grounding, meditation, yoga, tai chi, qigong, progressive muscle relaxation, autogenic training, bio-feedback, imagery work.
- **Hydration:** Be certain to drink sufficient water and nutritious fluids as your body adjusts to a new climate and daily rhythm.
- **Making adjustments:** Monitor your stress levels while abroad and adjust your daily routine (sleep patterns, exercise, food balance, hydration) to meet the needs of your new location.
- **Positive attitude:** Try to keep perspective on the challenges that you may encounter and work toward your long-term study abroad goals.
- **Support structures:** Identify who in country is available to provide support and guidance when you feel confused or challenged.
- **Finding resilience:** Keep in mind that it is important to recover and grow from adversity and navigate difficult challenges with awareness, intention, and skill. Seek out healthy connections to others, focus on balanced self-care, keep an open, engaged mind, and work to address manageable challenges with patience and intention.

The following website provides suggestions: [gloaled.us/peacecorps/maintaining-strong-mental-and-emotional-health.asp](http://gloaled.us/peacecorps/maintaining-strong-mental-and-emotional-health.asp).

## Mental Health

Learning abroad can be both fulfilling and challenging for all students and may present some additional challenges for those with mental health conditions. Even if you have no history of a mental health condition, it is possible that the impact of cultural adjustment or being in a foreign environment can influence your well-being.

The Health Information Form requires you to disclose any past and current mental health issues, family history of mental health, indications of mental health concerns, and current prescription medicines. It is imperative for LAC staff to receive this information before you study abroad to best support you and provide reasonable accommodations.

Past or current treatment for psychiatric and mental health conditions does not preclude you from studying abroad. However, if a healthcare professional recommends no travel or travel under certain conditions that cannot be met at a certain study location, you may be encouraged to focus on your health first and postpone program participation until a later time.

The following steps for managing mental health are important, regardless of where you will be traveling:

- Meet with your mental health professional prior to departure to discuss learning abroad and its implications, your plan to manage your health while abroad, and access to alternative support networks.
- Discuss a realistic communication plan for your time abroad with your support networks (i.e., family and friends).
- Understand that ups and downs are normal during study abroad. Check in with yourself often and seek support if you are feeling more intense ups and downs than expected.
- Connect with an LAC staff member prior to departure to set up on-site care with a mental health care professional, if required.
- Plan to bring sufficient amounts of prescriptions with you for the entire duration of your program. Work with LAC staff to ensure you can safely bring all necessary prescriptions abroad.

### Resources for UofM Students

- Student Counseling Services ([counseling.umn.edu](http://counseling.umn.edu)) and Boynton Mental Health Clinic ([bhs.umn.edu/east-bank-clinic/mental-health-services.htm](http://bhs.umn.edu/east-bank-clinic/mental-health-services.htm)): Staff in both settings can inform you about treatment options and offer immediate crisis counseling if needed.
- Behavior Consultation Team (BCT) ([mentalhealth.umn.edu/facstaff/behavioral-consultation.html](http://mentalhealth.umn.edu/facstaff/behavioral-consultation.html)): If you are concerned about causing harm to yourself or others, call the University's BCT at 011.612.626.3030.

For additional resources, visit [mentalhealth.umn.edu](http://mentalhealth.umn.edu).

## Safety

### Travel & Safety Considerations

#### State Department Travel website

Consult the United States State Department Country Information sheets, travel advisories and travel warnings at <http://travel.state.gov> for up-to-date information on travel precautions for the country where you will be studying or traveling.

#### CDC Information

Review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://cdc.gov/travel>) and US Department of State (<http://travel.state.gov>) websites for travel and safety information.

### Program-Specific Safety Considerations

You are responsible for reviewing the US State Department's website at <http://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 hugglers, 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.

#### Embassy STEP Registration

The LAC will register you with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), which makes your presence in France known to the US Department of State. Once you are enrolled in this program, you will receive the travel updates and information directly as they are issued. Please carefully review these messages and contact the LAC or on-site staff with questions. For more information, visit: <https://step.state.gov/step>.

In addition, the local embassy can be a source of assistance and information in the case of an emergency. Each of our programs has information about the local embassy, and



you might even have an embassy visitor at your orientation. For more information, visit the Country Information sheet at <http://travel.state.gov> for the countries you will visit and study in.

In order to ensure that all official communication from the US Department of State is sent to the correct address while you are abroad, check your official contact information prior to departure. Visit <http://onestop.umn.edu> to verify that the information is correct. If your contact information changes, you must notify the LAC.

## Sexual Harassment & Sexual Assault

The University of Minnesota and Learning Abroad Center take the risk of sexual harassment and assault very seriously. This topic will be covered in orientations in more depth, and LAC staff and our colleagues on site are trained and prepared to provide support to victim survivors.

Anyone who experiences sexual harassment or sexual assault while abroad must deal with the stress of this unwanted event in a place and culture that is unfamiliar. Being away from the support and comfort of home can exacerbate feelings of hurt, confusion, anger, and loss of control. This is normal.

Do not tolerate behavior that feels threatening or disrespectful by staff in country, faculty members, or homestay family members. When in any doubt, consult with someone with whom you feel comfortable.

Report any incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault to in-country or LAC staff so that we can help you understand your options and supports available. The Aurora Center is a fully confidential resource for all students on LAC programs, even if you don't normally attend the University of Minnesota.

For more information on resources, including the Aurora Center, visit: [global.umn.edu/travel/assault/index.html](http://global.umn.edu/travel/assault/index.html).

The University of Minnesota prohibits sexual harassment and retaliation. In compliance with Title IX, the LAC will work with the University's Title IX coordinator on any related inquiries and complaints. For more information, please contact the LAC or visit <https://diversity.umn.edu/eoaa/titleix>.

## Alcohol & Drug Use

The University of Minnesota Code of Conduct and Code of Conduct for Education Abroad allow for responsible drinking if you are legally allowed to drink in your host country. Illegal, irresponsible drinking and/or misbehaving while drinking are violations of the University's policy.

The University of Minnesota has a no-tolerance approach to drug use while abroad. Students using drugs abroad may immediately be removed from the program at their own cost. You are subject to the laws of the host country while

abroad, and penalties for foreigners using or possessing drugs abroad are often very strict.

For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/alcoholdrugs](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/alcoholdrugs).

## Personal Safety

When you are traveling overseas, there are a number of precautions you should follow in order to travel safely. Consult the US State Department's resources and your orientation materials for up-to-date information on travel precautions for the country where you will be studying or traveling.

For more information on women travelers: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/Women.html>

For more information on students abroad: <http://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html>

For more information on staying safe while abroad: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/safetyabroad](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/safetyabroad).

## Emergency Procedures

All students are required to carry a cell phone for use in an emergency. On-site staff will contact you on your cell phone, and you will utilize your phone to contact on-site staff and/or emergency services. In a life-threatening emergency, please seek immediate emergency care; otherwise, please contact on-site staff for assistance and recommendations. On-site staff are trained and have resources available to respond to all types of emergencies including, but not limited to, civil disturbance, natural disaster, illness or injury, hospitalization, robbery or pickpocketing, sexual assault/harassment, hate crimes, and mental health.

The LAC will utilize on-site resources as well as insurance and security resources, including CISI. See more details above on insurance.

For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/emergency](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/emergency).

## Independent Travel

### Independent Travel Notification

You are encouraged to travel during official program break periods, over holidays, or after the program is completed. During the program, travel on the weekends should be limited to nearby locations to ensure that you are able to maintain good rest, health, and timely completion of all coursework. Students are not permitted to travel during the program dates, including on weekends or vacations, to countries currently under a US State Department Travel Warning. See <http://travel.state.gov> for the most up-to-date list.

Consult with the on-site staff, well in advance of your planned travel, to understand if there are other locations, beyond the Travel Warning locations, that you are not permitted to visit within your host country or region. These limitations are put in place for your safety and security and apply within the program dates. If you choose to visit a Travel Warning or other banned location before or after your program, you do so at your own risk.

All LAC program participants must notify the on-site staff of any independent travel that leaves the program location overnight. The required independent travel form is provided in the appendix of this handbook. Some sites will collect this form and others will have a slightly different way of collecting the same information, so refer to your on-site orientation for more specifics.

## Travel Restrictions

### *During the Program*

Students are not allowed to visit any country currently under a US Department of State Travel Warning as a part of personal travel. Please visit <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html> for up-to-date information about travel warning countries. If you have questions about travel restrictions, contact the LAC.

## Driving & Renting Vehicles Abroad

It is against University and Learning Abroad Center policy to drive or rent motor vehicles (including motor scooters or motorcycles) while a participant on an LAC program. These limitations extend from the start date to the end date of your program and are put in place for your safety and security. Traffic accidents are the leading cause of injury and death of students abroad.

## Arrival Logistics

### Arriving at the Program Site

If there are problems while you are traveling that will delay your arrival in Montpellier, call the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC) 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.

You can also send an email to Peggy Retka in the Learning Abroad Center ([retka@umn.edu](mailto:retka@umn.edu)) and Françoise Chaton in France ([defre001@umn.edu](mailto:defre001@umn.edu)) if you're delayed and need to notify us.

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.

Transportation at the end of the program is not provided.

## Coordinated 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.

## Independent Arrival

Students arriving independently should budget about 50 euros in cash for transportation to the arrival hotel.

## Initial 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 Information

### Orientation in Country

The morning after the arrival day, the on-site staff will meet you to begin the on-site orientation. This orientation will consist of a tour of Montpellier and the campus, choosing courses, health and safety information and program policies, and more.

Let your friends and family members know that you may not be able to contact them immediately after you arrive. You will likely be exhausted and busy with your new surroundings. Inform them that you will contact them as soon as you are settled. Reassure your friends and family members that the Learning Abroad Center (LAC) monitors all student arrivals and will contact the emergency contact listed on your application if you do not arrive as scheduled.

### Program Excursions

For semester and academic-year students, four excursions 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.

Finally, there are optional excursions made available through local travel agents. If sufficient students elect to participate, a variety of excursions can be offered. Past examples include a two-day visit to Paris, a long weekend

in Barcelona, a week-long excursion to the Loire Valley and Normandy, a 10-day excursion to Morocco, a day trip to Provence, hiking in the Massif de l'Espinousse, and horseback riding on the beach.

## In-Country Staff

Françoise Chaton, the Resident Director, and her staff are available to help you in all aspects of your stay in Montpellier, whether it is an academic or a 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.

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.

## Program Center

The program office, or “Bureau,” is located on the edge of the Centre Ville, Montpellier’s city center. The Bureau houses the on-site staff’s offices, computers for student use, free Wi-Fi, a kitchen and sitting area, and travel resources. Students are welcome to visit the office to check email, work on homework, get help from the on-site staff, etc., during business hours. The office is open from late morning until 7 p.m. weekdays during the semester. Summer hours may vary.

## Housing Considerations

### Housing Options

Four housing options are available: homestays, traditional French apartments, student studios, and the university dorms. Typically, about half of students choose homestays, and the other half choose the traditional apartment.

### Notification of Placement

You will be notified of your housing placement as soon as the LAC 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 LAC website for exact dates.

## Housing Changes

Semester and academic-year 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. Reimbursements will not be distributed on site, and students must be prepared to pay additional on-site costs such as utilities and food. Any reimbursement for changes in housing will be credited to the student’s UofM student account. Any change in housing must be discussed with the on-site staff in advance.

Academic-year students who wish to change housing mid-year are encouraged to indicate so on the housing request form and are **required** to speak with the on-site staff about it once on site. There is no guarantee that a switch will be possible, and if the switch is made a penalty fee may be charged.

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.

## Homestay Families

### The Placement Process

Students wishing to live with a host family should indicate this on the Housing Request Form. Please indicate whether you prefer to be more independent, or more involved in family life, as well as preferences about living with animals, children, etc. The on-site staff does their best to place students with a good match, and host families are thoroughly vetted before students are placed with them.

We recommend that students with significant dietary restrictions or severe pet allergies choose other housing options.

### Homestay Conditions

#### 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 a 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.

## Housing Contracts

The LAC 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.

## Holidays

During school breaks, host families will not expect you to remain in Montpellier. You may use this period to travel. If you plan to stay with your host family over the break, you and your host family must notify the on-site staff by the deadline posted on site. If the host family will not be available during the break, we will find alternative housing for you. You can store your belongings at the host family if you are traveling during break.

## Before & After the Program

Host families do not expect to host you before 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 may be able to leave your belongings at the program office. However, this is not guaranteed. 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. Telephone calls, even local calls, are very expensive in Europe. Many other options are available to keep in touch with family and friends in the US (Skype, Facetime, Whatsapp, etc.). 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

All families will provide Internet access. Discuss Internet use and charging your devices with your family. If you choose to bring a laptop, you should be considerate of the high cost of electricity in France when using a laptop at the host family's home. Make sure that you have French system-compatible charging cables.

## 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. An inexpensive option for lunch (about 8 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

## Tips for a Successful Homestay

### 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.

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.

## Apartment

The apartment option gives you the most freedom to maintain your current lifestyle while in France. However, this freedom presents its own challenges, and you will need to make an extra effort to integrate into French society, meet French people, and practice your French.

Students who wish to live in an apartment have a choice between two types of apartments. The first type is a typical French apartment; the second is a studio apartment at Residence l'Observatoire. Both options are described in detail below. At the end of the semester, you will have an exit interview to reassess the condition of your apartment. Anything that is damaged must be repaired or replaced, at your landlord's discretion. If you fail to comply with these requests, the required amount will be deducted from your damage deposit. If you do not participate in the exit interview, your deposit will be forfeited.

Approximately **six months** after the program ends, your landlord will send the deposit—minus any outstanding bills and damage—to the LAC. The LAC will credit you for the deposit, minus processing and exchange fees, and notify you when your credit has been issued.

### Typical French Apartments

Students choosing this option will room with 1–3 other students. Usually these are other program participants, but occasionally your roommates may be Americans from other study abroad programs, other international students, or even French students. You may have to share a bedroom with a program participant of the same sex.

These apartments are located in the city, but they are generally not on or next to the Place de la Comédie. Be prepared for a 30-minute commute by public transportation and/or on foot to the University and to downtown.

French apartments within the city are, necessarily, in the historic medieval buildings that constitute Montpellier's metro area. These apartments are the most desirable for French people because of their charm, character, and convenient location. However, since they are in older buildings, there may be drafts, leaks, and uneven heating. Older people and families with small children may also be living in the same building. As a result, you need to be respectful of your neighbors, maintain reasonable hours, and be flexible regarding the realities of living in a historic setting. Loud parties are not allowed.

Be financially prepared to pay for utilities (electricity, heat, phone, water), since utilities are not included in this option. Refer to the Student Budget Estimate on the LAC's website for estimated costs for these expenses. Once in France, you will be provided with information on how you will receive and pay your bill, as well as how to activate the utilities for your apartment, if necessary. Be prepared for difficulties and delays during this process.

Basic Internet is provided with apartment placements. Wi-Fi is available at the program office, on the University of Montpellier campus, and at many cafes and restaurants.

Try to pay any outstanding utility bills before departure. However, the final bill for utilities may not be available upon departure. In such a case, the landlord will deduct any outstanding bills from your security deposit.

### **Furnishings**

Apartment kitchens and bathrooms are equipped with minimal furniture and supplies. The program will ensure that you have a bed, a comforter, sheets, a lamp, a desk, living and/or dining room furniture, and basic cooking supplies. Be prepared to purchase items such as toilet paper, light bulbs, trash bags, bath towels, etc.

All items provided by the landlord must be left in good condition, and the comforter must be professionally dry cleaned.

Please note that hosting couchsurfers at your program apartment or advertising the apartment on Airbnb is not allowed.

### **Apartment Deposit**

All students who are placed in an apartment are required to pay a \$500 damage deposit. This charge will appear on your University of Minnesota account, and **you must make payment for this charge to that account, even if your home university pays the rest of your fees.**

You will participate in an entrance interview when you arrive at your apartment, which will allow you and the landlord to list the condition of the apartment and any furnishings. Regardless of the condition of the apartment and furnishings, you are fully liable for any damage that occurs during the time you are living in the apartment. The concept of "normal wear and tear" does not exist in France. Any damage to the apartment or furnishings will be deducted from your damage deposit. If these bills exceed your deposit, you will be liable for these costs. The LAC will hold your transcript until all outstanding debts are resolved.

### **Student Studio**

The student studio is a student residence located in the downtown area. The university is about 30 minutes away by foot and tram.

Since all apartments in the residence are studios, you will not have roommates if you choose this option. The benefits of this placement are its convenient location and privacy. You should also be aware that there is typically little social interaction among residents, so this is only a good option if you are very independent. If you are placed in this option it is difficult to change your placement once you arrive on site and you may be liable for the cost of the studio for the duration of the semester.

The efficiency apartment offers wireless access and laundry facilities in the building. Utilities are included in the cost.

## **Dormitory**

Dormitories in France are very different from US dormitories. The rooms are very small, there is little social life, the dorms are not well lighted at night, and there are no kitchen facilities. Be very thoughtful before you select this option. It is best for very independent, self-motivated students.

### **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**

The rooms are small, and social interaction with other residents can be minimal compared to a US dormitory setting. Dormitory rooms consist of a single bed, a small desk, a lamp, and a closet. Linens are available for rent. Kitchen facilities are available on each floor and small refrigerators are provided in each room. In addition, each room is equipped with a small shower and a toilet. Laundry facilities and a small café are found on site as well as some basic recreational facilities (e.g., ping-pong tables, basketball and tennis courts, etc.)

### **Security**

At the French dormitories, there are fewer security personnel than in the US, and there is minimal security lighting.

### **Internet**

All dormitories have basic 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.

## **Independent Housing**

If you have family or friends in Montpellier and you would like to stay with them, this may be considered on a case-by-

case basis. Keep in mind that the family members/friend's housing and location must be visited and approved by the on-site staff, there is no reduction in the program fee, and approval is not guaranteed. Contact the Learning Abroad Center program staff to discuss this option, if you wish to pursue it.

## Liability Insurance

Regardless of your housing arrangement, consider your insurance coverage and needs. Does your renter's or homeowner's insurance cover your items if they are lost or stolen abroad? You may also wish to buy additional insurance in case you accidentally damage your accommodations, since any damages will be yours to pay.

For more information, visit: <http://global.umn.edu/travel/insurance/outgoing.html#personal-tab>.

Your French student status provides you with basic French liability insurance. Please note that theft is not covered by this insurance.

## Visitors

### Program Housing

Students' personal guests (e.g. friends, family, etc.) are not allowed to stay overnight in program housing, including apartments, dorms, and homestays.

### During Program Period

Friends or relatives may visit during official program breaks or before or after the program, but not while classes are in session. Visits during this time interfere with your ability to focus on the program and host culture. Visitors are not allowed to stay with you in your official program housing.

## Academics

Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to the academic policies for study abroad as published on the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC)'s website: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/academic-policies](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/academic-policies).

## Courses

### Overview of Program Courses

The basic program consists of a prescribed set of courses (listed below) for a total of 15 semester credits. All courses are taught in English by French faculty, with the exception of the French language course, which is taught in French.

- *Introduction to Elementary Teaching* (3 cr). Equivalent to CI 3211.
- *Elementary Teaching Practicum* (3 cr). Equivalent to CI 3212.
- *Cultural Perspectives on Language Learning* (3 cr). Equivalent to CI 3610.
- *Comparative Education and Pedagogy* (3 cr).
- *French Language* (all levels; 3–5 cr).

Courses are taught by local faculty exclusively for students on this program, allowing for individualized attention and class discussions.

The teaching practicum consists of 70 hours of dedicated classroom time in an English language class under the supervision of the English language teacher. There are also additional hours dedicated to group observation of different schools and English language classes. The faculty supervisor will visit students in their classes and provide individualized feedback.

All students complete a digital story as part of their course requirements to document their experience. This project can also be used as part of a professional portfolio. A Guide, grading rubric, and recorded webinar on composing a digital story will be provided to you prior to departure. The faculty and the program staff will further assist you with this assignment once you are in France.

The program offers French language courses at different levels to meet each student's unique language skills and includes vocabulary specific to the classroom teaching environment.

### Language of Instruction

All courses are taught in English, with the exception of the French language course.

### Global Identity

***Global Identity: Connecting Your International Experience to Your Future***

This optional, one-credit course will provide opportunities for you to “make meaning” of 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 succeed in different cultural contexts is vital to your future. This course will help you apply these skills to your post-graduation plans.

For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/academics/globalidentity](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/academics/globalidentity).

## Volunteering

Volunteering is allowed and encouraged while on the program. Contact the on-site staff upon arrival for assistance in finding volunteer opportunities.

## Registration

### Registration through the UofM

#### *University of Minnesota–Twin Cities Students*

Before registering, you should meet with your academic adviser(s) to discuss the courses you plan to take and complete the Academic Planning form. All University of Minnesota Twin Cities students will be responsible for registering themselves using the University of Minnesota online registration system. Prior to departure, you will receive an email with all the necessary information for registration. Do not look for your class number to appear on the class schedule on the MyU website. The numbers required for registration can only be obtained from the LAC. If you register for a course that is listed online, you have registered for the wrong course and may be subject to tuition charges. Complete your registration by the stated deadline in the registration instruction email from the LAC. Check online for holds or required registration approvals that would prevent you from registering for classes and clear them before the registration deadline. The LAC cannot remove holds on student accounts. Failure to complete registration may result in late registration fees and may delay or prevent financial aid disbursement. If you do not register for study abroad, your grades cannot be processed. Failure to register before departing for study abroad may result in no credit for your study abroad program.

#### *UMN System Students*

Students from the University of Minnesota–Morris, Crookston, Rochester, or Duluth will be set up as a multi-U student by their home campus. Please contact your study abroad office to verify that your multi-U status has been set up. You can then register as a UMTC student (see above).

#### *Non-University of Minnesota Students*

Students from other institutions will be registered by the Learning Abroad Center and do not need to register themselves through the MyU website.

### Maintaining Full-Time Status

Students are required to maintain full-time registration status as defined by their individual program throughout the duration of their study abroad program. Dropping or withdrawing from a class will not be allowed if it will bring a student below the required full-time enrollment.

### Post-Program Registration

While abroad, University of Minnesota students and most other students will need to register for classes for the following term on their home campus. You must make any necessary arrangements prior to departure so that you are able to register while overseas. In many cases, students are able to register online.

## Course Drop/Add/Withdrawal

### Course Changes

These must be made in consultation with the on-site staff and per the deadlines as outlined on the LAC's Academic Policies website.

Students must maintain a minimum of 15 credits per semester (excluding the optional Global Identity course) and 3–5 credits per summer session. A semester student may drop to 13 credits with the approval of the on-site director and if the student maintains enrollment in all required program courses. At no time may a semester student's enrollment fall below a minimum course load of 12 credits. Students with fewer than 12 credits will be dismissed from the program. Students may not drop courses that the program stipulates are a required component of the program. All course registration changes may have financial aid implications. Students are responsible for understanding the financial aid consequences of changing their enrollment. The deadline for dropping and adding courses without penalty is two weeks after the program start date. After this deadline, and up to 10 weeks after the program start date, students will receive a "W" for any dropped courses.

After the final deadline to drop a course has passed but prior to the first exam, semester students may drop a course only with special permission. Students wishing to drop a course must consult with the on-site staff and complete a special request form to adjust their enrollment. The form will be forwarded to the University of Minnesota for approval. Generally, only in the case of extenuating circumstances (sustained illness, for example) will a student be allowed permission to drop a course after the mid-semester deadline. Approved requests will be recorded on the transcript with a grade of "W." No requests may be submitted after the final exam. In some cases, a student's home university may not allow a student to withdraw from a course and will record an "F" in lieu of a "W." It is a student's responsibility to check the policies of their home institution.

### UMN 13-Credit Policy

University of Minnesota students are required to maintain a minimum enrollment of 13 credits per semester or maintain the minimum credit enrollment determined by their study abroad program, whichever is greater. For certain semester programs, 12 credits is considered a full-time course load.



# Academic Culture

## Teaching Styles

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 LAC 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.

In general, the French academic system is much more independent than that of the US. Instead of assigning homework, professors expect that you will independently study the material. Especially in Integrated courses, there may be no specific homework assignments until the final exam at the end of the course. It is your responsibility to review the materials and prepare for the next class session. 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.

Past students have noted that most Integrated courses do not have formal syllabi, and even in those that do, professors are at liberty to alter the syllabus as they wish. Consequently, you may initially feel frustrated and uncertain about grading procedures. Because French courses are less structured than US courses it is up to you to develop good study habits. The success rate in the French system is relatively low overall, and students are expected to be independent learners.

Study abroad students who succeed are those who do the required class work, study diligently on their own, and take responsibility for their own learning.

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.

In addition, the program expects all students in integrated classes to write a supplemental paper on the course topic. This paper will be graded by University of Montpellier faculty and can increase the probability that you will receive a passing grade. We expect you to write this paper even if you do not think you will fail, since it will also help you to review for the final exam.

We also encourage you to take any Integrated courses “S/N” (pass/fail) if your home university and/or major department allows it.

### **Pass/Fail Option**

Participants on the Integrated track may take University of Montpellier integrated courses on a pass/fail (“S/N”) basis. You must indicate pass/fail with your initial registration. To receive a grade of “S,” according to University of Minnesota guidelines, the course grade must be C- or higher. This option may be attractive, since integrated courses can be very challenging. However, it is your responsibility to check with your home institution and your major/minor departments prior to departure to determine whether “S” grades for your coursework in Montpellier will be accepted. There will be no grade-base (“A/F” or “S/N”) changes after the drop/add deadline overseas.

Students will also take the optional *Global Identity: Connecting your International Experience to your Future* course pass/fail.

All other courses for all program options must be taken on an A–F basis.

### **Optional Course Paper**

Students have the opportunity to write an additional paper for Integrated courses in order to increase the chances of receiving a passing grade (“C-/S”). In order for this additional paper to be factored in, you must also have completed all coursework for the course, including the final exam. You must speak with the on-site staff and complete this paper prior to the end of the semester.

All students are strongly encouraged to write this extra paper to factor into their integrated course grade. Since University of Montpellier courses do not have continuous feedback and often only have a final exam, it is very difficult to anticipate your grade. Many students are surprised by their low grade if they rely only on the final exam for their full course grade. Once the program is over, grades cannot be changed.

This additional paper will count for one-third of the student's final grade and the grade from the course, as reported to the program by the French university, will count for two-thirds (final grade = 1/3 optional paper + 2/3 French university course grade).

### 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. If you are taking integrated classes, make sure you are aware of the time and place of your final exams. Faculty members do not waive exams for students, and a missed exam can cause you to fail the course.

### French Grading System

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:

### Special courses for US students

French Grade	University of Minnesota Grade
(1–20)	(A–F)
15.1–20.0	A
14.1–15.0	A-
13.6–14.0	B+
12.6–13.5	B
12.1–12.5	B-
11.6–12.0	C+
10.6–11.5	C
10.1–10.5	C-
8.1–10.0	D
1.0–8.0	F

### Integrated courses at University of Montpellier

French Grade	University of Minnesota Grade
(1–20)	(A–F)
11.6–20.0	A
10.1–11.5	A-
9.6–10.0	B+
8.6–9.5	B
8.1–8.5	B-
7.6–8.0	C+
6.6–7.5	C
6.1–6.5	C-
4.1–6.0	D
0.0–4.0	F

W—Withdrawal; student has withdrawn from the course and will not receive a grade

NR—Not Reported; grade not received from the faculty member

—Incomplete; granted only in case of approved request

The on-site staff, under guidance from the LAC, reserves the right to adjust grades for Integrated courses should the grading scale of the professor vary greatly from the standardized system. This will be done on a case-by-case basis and will not necessarily affect the grades of other students in the course. The on-site staff will pay special attention to comments and recommendations provided by the professor on the grade sheet in order to determine the translation of a final course grade.

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.

### Academic Rigor

The program is designed to be academically rigorous, and it is each student's responsibility to maintain good study habits and complete assignments on time.

Approach your professors if you need clarification on course material. One idea might be to ask the professor about recommended readings on the course bibliography.

### Books & Materials

You will have access to library books at University of Montpellier 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.

## Grades & Transcripts

Grades will be posted to the University of Minnesota transcript 6–8 weeks after the LAC has received them from the program. Grades will be converted into US equivalents, if necessary, prior to being posted on the University of Minnesota transcript. The LAC will provide one free transcript to the home institution of all non-University of Minnesota students. Additional transcripts can be ordered separately on the One Stop Student Services website: <http://onestop.umn.edu>.

## Incompletes

Students are generally expected to complete all course requirements by the end of the term. In very rare circumstances, students can arrange an “Incomplete” in consultation with the instructor, the on-site staff, and the LAC, whereby the remaining work can be finished shortly after returning to the US.

## Grade Appeals

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
- Health concerns/missed classes

Consult with your program contact in the LAC if you believe an error has occurred and you wish to complete the Grade Petition Form.

## 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 Learning Abroad Center or affiliated programs offered through the LAC, students should make inquiries and appeals to the appropriate University officials, in the following order: the program representative in the LAC, the Assistant Dean for Learning Abroad, the Student Conflict 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.

## Living in the Host Country

### History

Montpellier is one of the largest cities in the south of France. There are more than 300,000 inhabitants in the city and its greater metropolitan area. Located in the *département* of Hérault, Montpellier 10 miles from the Mediterranean coast and about 125 miles from the Spanish border, it has been a capital of the region called *Languedoc-Roussillon*. Montpellier has been famous for centuries for its university, especially its medical and law schools.

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: <http://ot-montpellier.fr/en>.

## 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

Month	°F	°C
October	61	16
January	30	-1
April	59	20
July	75	24

You can find up-to-date weather at <http://www.accuweather.com/en/fr/montpellier/134138/weather-forecast/134138>.

## Languages of the Country

The French are very attached to their language, as it has great meaning for their national identity. Any effort you make to speak French will go a long way with the locals. There are also many regional languages and dialects in France, such as Occitan, Breton, and Alsacien. Many people also speak English.

## Cultural Considerations

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 or no 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.

## Food Considerations

### 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 Montpellier and 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 University of Montpellier, you will be able to purchase tickets for a cafeteria-style meal in one of several *restaurants universitaires* at University of Montpellier for about 8 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 you are living with a host family, ask them if it is okay to help yourself to food between mealtimes. Any snacks must be purchased on your own.
- 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.



## Safe Food & Water

Tap water is generally safe to drink in France. Take the same precautions you would at home for food, such as washing all fruits and vegetables, and cooking food thoroughly.

## Utility Usage

### Electricity

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.

### Water

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.

## 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:

French	English
<b>Les maladies sexuelles</b>	sexually transmitted diseases
<b>La pharmacie</b>	drugstore
<b>Un préservatif</b>	a condom
<b>Le SIDA</b>	AIDS

## Dating Apps

Be cautious when considering online dating applications or other venues for meeting people. This is particularly important when seeking to meet new people because there are different cultural norms and values that surround relationships of all kinds. What might be considered a casual drink or meal with a person of interest can have a much more significant meaning in a different cultural context. Online dating applications can carry different connotations or serve different purposes than they do in the United States. It is important to remember that it is very difficult for you to safely determine who might be genuinely interested in you and who has ulterior motives (such as stealing your passport or money, or seeking a visa to the US). Given the significant cultural differences between the US and countries abroad, the Learning Abroad Center strongly encourages students to prioritize their academics and be mindful to seek out cultural experiences that are safe, such as through homestays, local staff, and program activities.

## 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 LAC on-site staff ensure that students remain as safe as possible during these events. It is important for students to follow LAC staff instructions during these strikes, stay away from demonstrations, and avoid over-dramatizing these events to friends and family members at home.

## Living in Montpellier

### 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 University of Montpellier student identification card. Your student ID qualifies you for a discounted monthly transit pass. You can use the same ticket 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. 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 <http://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.

### Tipping

The tip is generally included in the bill in French restaurants and cafés. The terms "*service compris*" or "*prix net*" indicate 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.

## Communication

### Email & Internet

The program office has wireless access for about 10 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 you can access the Internet via your laptop for free.

There is wireless availability on campus, in the program office, at host families, and at some cafés.

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 dormitories and apartments should keep in mind the possible security risks and stow their laptop in a protected location when they leave the room. 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 you to be sure your 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. Keep in mind that derogatory comments, especially on social media, can result in legal claims and have extended legal implications even after you have returned to the United States.

## Telephone

If you plan to use your US cell phone while abroad, check with your telephone carrier for international plans to reduce the cost of making calls and texting, both for you and for your friends and family. Some students insert a French SIM card into their US cell phone, but you should consider whether you want to carry an expensive US cell phone with you on a daily basis. It could get stolen.

The LAC 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 in the program office. The LAC is not responsible for the condition of the used cell phones, but they are significantly less expensive than a new phone. Your France cell phone will allow incoming calls free of charge.

You may not be able to call home immediately upon arrival because 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.

## Mail

Airmail between the US and France takes seven to 10 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

because 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.

## Money Matters

### Credit Cards

A credit card is a good resource for emergency situations and for obtaining cash advances, including cash for emergency situations, as long as you have a personal PIN. It is important to know your PIN in both letters and numbers. Please note that some ATMs require that the card have a metal “chip” visible on the front for added security. Many US credit cards now have this chip, but it is wise to ask your credit card company whether they can issue you a “chip credit card” if you do not yet have one.

Keep in mind that you may incur fees for using your credit card abroad. Be sure to notify your bank and credit card company that you will be traveling abroad for the semester/summer. If you do not, they may assume your foreign transactions are fraudulent and may deny further transactions.

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 pay 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: <http://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.

### **Bank Account**

Semester and academic year students will open an account at a local bank in Montpellier. It can take up to a month to obtain checks for your account. Please have access to a copy of your birth certificate in order to complete the process to open a bank account. On-site staff will assist you in this process.

### **Travelers Checks**

The LAC 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 LAC 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.

### **Financial Planning**

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](https://umabroad.umn.edu/programs/europe/montpellier/fees).

The cost of living in France is, overall, about the same as in Minneapolis. Some costs are higher, while others are lower. For more detail, consult <https://www.expatistan.com/cost-of-living/index>.

University of Montpellier has its own sports program and facility. In Montpellier you will also find a sports park that includes a running course. The most popular individual activity is hiking through the Cévennes (the mountain region in which Montpellier is located). The area is too hilly for bicycling, but you will be close to the beach for other activities. Other activities include dancing, skiing, swimming, rugby, and soccer, just to name a few.

There are more than 1,000 athletic clubs available to students. The cost is 25 euros for sports insurance at the University. Private clubs will be approximately 300 euros per year, although discounts may be available. Additionally, there is an Olympic swimming pool in downtown Montpellier that is available all day for swimming for 8 euros per visit.

Sports available at University of Montpellier and through the private clubs include volleyball, badminton, swimming, basketball, baseball, soccer, Tai Chi, skiing, skating, sailing, hiking, weight rooms, martial arts, racquetball, and squash. For students interested in music, there are several local bands (jazz, classical, etc.), and private lessons are possible. You can discuss these options with the on-site staff once you are in France.

## **Tips from Students**

### **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.

### **How would you suggest meeting French people?**

- In classes. Talk to people in your classes. They seldom start a conversation, but once you make the first move, you'll find them eager to be friends.
- Neighbors.
- Student and town activities open to all (sports, organizations, etc.).
- Take smaller classes with French people (e.g., translation).



- Contact with family.
- Groups/clubs on campus (e.g., ecology).
- My internship provided an outlet in which I could interact with a group of students my age with common interests.

#### **What did you think of the academic aspect of the program?**

- When I started the integrated classes, I felt overwhelmed at the information that was thrown at me, but it slowly spread out over the course and began to make sense. Advice to others: Don't get overwhelmed. Hang in there.
- The French system is different. It can be extremely frustrating. There is not always feedback on courses. If there are assignments, there are not usually remarks. Don't expect to get final exams back.
- Courses varied. Some professors were very student-supportive and others weren't.

#### **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. Make sure to do a volunteer or internship or find more ways of connecting with others or it will not happen.
- 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. Don't be shy in your integrated classes.
- Make sure you conserve your money early on because you may not have enough when your two-week vacation rolls around.
- 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.
- Really really really think over your living decision. Apartment or homestay is a big decision and you must decide whether or not you're the type of person who could not only live, but excel and greatly enjoy a homestay. If you love going out at night, perhaps

apartment is better for you. Be smart about it.

- 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. Travel. In France too, not just other countries. Go to the film festival in Cannes in May.
- Be prepared to do a lot of out of classroom work because we were tested on things that we may not have necessarily went over in class or didn't go over extensively.

## Social & Cultural Adjustments

### Student Identity

As a foreigner in France, you will need to take the initiative to meet people. Don't be afraid to start a conversation with others.

### Race & Ethnicity

France is a multicultural 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 University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC) related to students of color and learning abroad. For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity).

### Gender

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.



## Sexual Orientation

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. As a result, it is important to disclose to the program staff either through the program housing form or by contacting the LAC program staff directly for guidance. For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity).

## 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 LAC in advance to discuss their particular needs. For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity) and [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity/disabilities/accessibilityabroad/europe/Montpellier](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity/disabilities/accessibilityabroad/europe/Montpellier).

## Religious Identity

While separation of church and state is very important in France, the French are, in general, very tolerant of religious difference. However, Muslim students may encounter some discrimination. French law also prohibits the wearing veils or other face coverings in public spaces. This law came about under the conservative government of President Sarkozy, and authorities see the full-face veil not only as an affront to French secular values but also as a potential security risk, since it conceals a person's identity. The law was challenged in the European Court of Human Rights in 2014, but was upheld, because it pertains not just to covering for religious reasons, but to all facial coverings (with some exclusions for safety reasons, such as masks for health reasons and motorcycle helmets). Nevertheless, this may make some Muslim students uncomfortable and it is important to be aware.

Religious-based dietary restrictions are not generally a problem, but we do advise students with such restrictions to consider the apartment option because host families may not be able to accommodate these needs.



# 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. 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

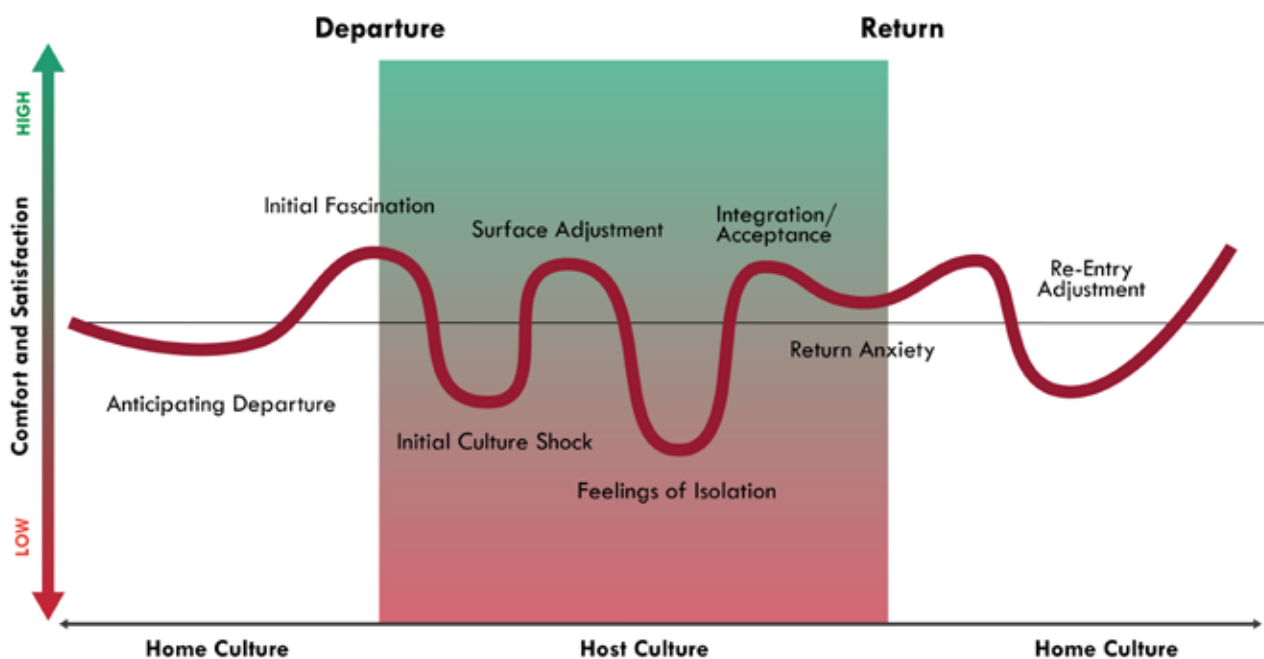
process. A sense of isolation sets in. Boredom and a lack of motivation often follow. Unresolved personal issues often surface during this stage.

**Integration/Acceptance:** After continued effort you find yourself more at ease with language, friends, and 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 who 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.



Adjusted from Oberg (1960) and Gullahorn (1963)

## Cultural Adjustment Curve

## Looking Ahead

### Career Information

#### Linking Undergraduate International Experience to Your Future Career

Learning abroad can help you develop and enhance intercultural competencies that are appealing to potential employers and graduate schools. Think about your academic and career goals before, during, and after your experience abroad. For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/career-info](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/career-info).

### Re-Entry

Students often find that it is just as difficult, if not more difficult, to readjust to life in the US after studying abroad. You may find that your perspectives have changed significantly and that you may not connect with friends and family in the same way you did before going abroad. The LAC offers a variety of resources and opportunities to help you readjust to life in the US. For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/process/reentry](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/process/reentry).

## Appendix

### Suggested Packing List

These are only suggestions; you should adjust accordingly to your own personal tastes and style. This list is typical for a four-month stay.

- Underwear
- Socks
- 4 shirts
- 3 sweaters
- 2 pair of jeans or pants
- 1 nice outfit (more if you are doing an internship)
- 1 pair of pajamas
- Comfortable walking shoes
- 1 pair of dress shoes
- 1 pair of beach shoes or sandals
- 1 swimsuit plus beach towel

- Raincoat
- Jacket for cool weather
- Winter coat
- Scarf and hat
- 2 pairs of shorts/2 skirts
- Sunglasses and sunhat
- Accessories
- 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.
- A copy of your insurance policy number and medical information concerning allergies, medications, blood type, immunization history, eyeglasses, or other prescriptions
- CISI card and brochure
- A photocopy of your passport and visa (scan your passport and email a copy to yourself)
- A photocopy (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
- 4 additional passport photos (needed for dormitory housing and other uses as part of orientation)
- A copy of your birth certificate

# Cultural 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.

**Beaux Gestes: A Guide to French Body Talk**, by Laurence Wylie. Laurence Wylie is the foremost authority on non-verbal French communication.

**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.

**Fragile Glory**, by Richard Bernstein. An extensive and excellent study of France today by the former cultural correspondent in Paris for the New York Times.

**French Lessons**, by Alice Kaplan. Memoir of a Midwestern American woman's introduction to the French language and culture.

**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.

**Village in the Vaucluse**, by Laurence Wylie. A look at daily life in a small French village.

## Films

### **Au revoir, les enfants**

Louis Malle directed this film based on events that occurred he attended a boarding school during WWII.

### **Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis**

A government worker in the south of France is transferred to the north; stereotypes fall aside, friendships are made, and relationships are renewed.

### **Jean de Florette** and **Manon des Sources**

These two films give an excellent picture of the scenery and culture of southern France.

### **Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain**

Set in Paris, mischievous Amélie works to bring joy to those she encounters in her own quest for personal happiness.

## **Marseille**

A French expat living in Canada returns to the city of his youth.

## **N'importe qui**

A local comedian and stuntman engages in all sorts of antics in Montpellier and its surrounding countryside.

## **Taxi**

An action-comedy film that takes place in Marseille in which a daredevil taxi driver helps the police to track down a band of robbers.

## Web

<http://france.com> (General France site)

<http://us.franceguide.com>

Practical and tourism information about France.

<http://ot-montpellier.fr/en>

Montpellier's tourist information site.

<http://zompist.com/frenchcult.html>

Slightly out of date and a bit tongue-in-cheek, but an amusing and generally enlightening insight into French culture.

<http://languedoc-france.info>

Information about Languedoc-Roussillon.

# Sample Housing Contract

## Real Estate Transactions France and Overseas Apartment Agreement

The undersigned \_\_\_\_\_ after having visited today with a designated representative of the landlord, the property found at

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contracts to occupy this property from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. The agreement will be in effect for 6 months/ 1 year and will be signed within 48 hours from today's date. The monthly rent of \_\_\_\_\_ Euro will be paid in advance, that is on the first day of each month by the University of Minnesota Program in Montpellier. The security deposit will be equivalent to one month's rent: \_\_\_\_\_ Euro. The deposit will remain secured for the duration of the agreement in a compte sequestre at the Crédit Lyonnais in Montpellier. This will serve as payment for any repairs which need to be made when the tenant leaves the apartment or as payment for any outstanding bills (electricity, water, gas, telephone). This security deposit will be refunded with the oversight of the landlord within thirty to sixty days after the tenant's departure. The tenant agrees to supply all information requested in the file given to him/her today and to return the apartment in a perfect state of cleanliness and in working order when s/he leaves.

Done \_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

Signatures:

Proposed tenant

Representative of the landlord

Representative of the University of Minnesota Program on site  
Signature indicates "read and approved."

### General Conditions

#### 1) State of the Property

The state of the contracted property will be established at the time of delivery of the keys to the tenant and is attached to the agreement. At the end of the agreement, from the time of the restitution of the keys by the student, the state of the contracted property will be again laid out between the parties during a meeting with the landlord and/or with the University of Minnesota representative 8 days prior, during business hours.

#### 2) Obligations of the Student

- a) The rent will be paid by the Director of the University of Minnesota Program; Mme Defrecheux-Chaton, according to the terms of agreement. The student is held to the following principal obligations:
- b) Make use of the property and equipment peacefully according to the use arranged at the signing of the agreement.
- c) Respond to defacement and loss which occur during the use of the property where the tenant has exclusive rights/obligations unless the damage results from outside force, from the fault of the landlord or from the actions of a third party not invited onto the property.
- d) Immediately inform the landlord of any and all disasters or damage occurring in the specified apartment, even if the damage is not apparent.
- e) Do not rearrange the apartment or equipment without the written consent of the landlord. The landlord could, if the student ignored this obligation, demand the rearrangement of the apartment to its previous state. The landlord will have at all times the right to demand that the student restore the apartment to its original state if rearrangement impairs the proper function of the equipment or impairs safety.
- f) Do not install or use any new heating system without verifying the cost. Under the students' liability is the use of the fireplaces in compliance with the current safety rules.
- g) Respect the rules of the building, posted in common areas of the common buildings. Follow all rules and instructions that have been formulated by the landlord from the decisions of the general assembly of the co-landlords or the interior rules of the building.
- h) Do not transfer the lease or sublease the apartment except with the written consent of the landlord and with the understanding of the rent. In the case of discontinuation of the agreement, the original tenant cannot make any claims against the landlord.
- i) In the case of furnished leases, respond to the loss or damage of the furnishings put into use by the landlord and of which inventory is presently joint.
- j) Do not move without fulfilling your obligations (payment of rent, etc.) and securing the release of various bills (water, electricity, gas, phone, etc.).
- k) Return to the landlord, upon your departure, all the keys to the rented property and leave your forwarding address.

Signature of the Student  
Signature indicates "read and approved."



**International Program of the University of Minnesota**  
**Director: Mme F. Defrecheux-Chaton, University of Montpellier**

**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.

**On our side, we ask our students:**

1. To ask you about the "rules" and habits of the household.
2. To notify you of any absences from dinner and in general to keep you up to date on their activities.
3. Not to help themselves to the food in the refrigerator.
4. To make their bed and keep their room tidy.
5. Not to abuse water and electricity.
6. Not to use your Internet or telephone without your permission.
7. Not to invite friends to the home without prior permission.
8. To inform you of all vacation plans and weekend travel plans.
9. To participate in family activities according to your directives and respect your privacy.
10. To communicate with you if a problem or tension arises and then speak with the program staff.

# STUDENT INDEPENDENT TRAVEL FORM

This form must be completed for all independent travel as indicated by the release and waiver you signed prior to participation. Failure to complete in full and submit prior to departure will be grounds for review and sanctions as outlined in the Policy on Student Conduct in Education Abroad Opportunities ([UMabroad.umn.edu/assets/files/PDFs/policies/rightsResponsibilities/Student\\_Conduct\\_17\\_web.pdf](http://UMabroad.umn.edu/assets/files/PDFs/policies/rightsResponsibilities/Student_Conduct_17_web.pdf)).

**Note:**

1. You are not allowed to travel to a country or region under US State Department Travel Advisory Levels 3 and 4 or a country or region not recognized by the US government (e.g., North Korea) without prior approval. A copy of the suspension committee approval is required with this form.
2. Independent travel should not interfere with academic work, classes, or events. On-site staff has the authority to deny travel due to such conflicts.
3. Failure to return on time may be subject to dismissal. Travel with your program contact details and keep the staff updated on any changes to your plans.

**Complete one form per student, per trip.**

Student name \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed destination(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Departure date \_\_\_\_\_ Return date \_\_\_\_\_

US emergency contact name, email, and phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information while traveling (below):

Dates at this location	City and country	Name of hotel or host	Phone number	Email address

**Transportation Information:**

**Additional Information:**

**Signatures**

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized On-Site Staff Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Acknowledge receipt: The form must be signed and dated by both the student and the authorized on-site staff person prior to travel and kept on file for the duration of program period.